THE CONFESSIONAL;

OR,

A Full and Free INQUIRY

INTO THE

RIGHT, UTILITY,

EDIFICATION, and SUCCESS,

Of Eſtabliſhing

SYSTEMATICAL CONFESSIONS

OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

Quàm vos facillimè agitis, quàm eſtis maxumè
Potentes, dites, fortunati, nobiles;
Tam maxumè vos æquo animo æqua noſcère
Oportet, ſi vos voltis perhiberi probos.

TERENT.

LONDON,
Printed for S. BLADON, in *Pater-Noſter-Row.*
MDCCLXVI.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I.

A ſummary View of the Riſe, Progreſs, and Succeſs of eſtabliſhed Confeſſions of Faith and Doctrine in Proteſtant *Churches,* Page 1

CHAP. II.

The Claim of a Right to eſtabliſh Confeſſions as Teſts of Orthodoxy, in Proteſtant *Churches, conſidered,* 22

CHAP. III.

The Apology of the Remonſtrants *for Confeſſions, in conſideration of their* Expedience *and* Utility, *examined,* 38

CHAP. IV.

A particular Examination of Biſhop Burnet's *Introduction to the* Expoſition *of the* xxxix *Articles of the Church of* England, 57

CHAP. V.

A View of the embaraſſed and fluctuating Caſuiſtry of thoſe Divines, who do not approve of, or differ from, Biſhop Burnet's *Method of juſtifying Subſcription*

ſcription to the xxxix Articles *of the Church of* England, Page 113

CHAP. VI.

A particular Examination of the Sentiments and Reaſonings of thoſe Writers who have pleaded for a Latitude in ſubſcribing to the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England, *upon the Suppoſition that every Proteſtant Church muſt act conſiſtently with its profeſſing to aſſert and maintain* Chriſtian Liberty, 171

CHAP. VII.

An Attempt to diſcover whence the Practice of ſubſcribing the xxxix Articles *in different Senſes, was derived; and by what ſort of Caſuiſts, and what ſort of Reaſoning, it was firſt propagated, and has been ſince eſpouſed,* 213

CHAP. VIII.

Concerning the Concluſions that ariſe from the foregoing Diſquiſitions, 281

PREFACE.

THE author of the following performance, freely confeſſes himſelf to be one of thoſe, who, in common with an eminent prelate, "have been ſeized with that epi-"demical malady of *idle* and *viſionary* men, THE "PROJECTING TO REFORM THE PUBLIC *." Nor would he have any reaſon to be aſhamed of claſſing with ſo conſpicuous a character, were it not that he hath unhappily taken an antipathy to that courſe of medicine, to which ſo many others of the fraternity owe the recovery of their *health* and *ſenſes*. He is ſtill, alas! labouring to bring his project to bear, even when all the world about him, is exclaiming at the folly of every one who is engaged in ſo deſperate an enterprize.

The honeſt truth is, he thinks the remedy worſe than the diſeaſe; having ſeldom obſerved any one of theſe patients perfectly cured, but by

* See, The *firſt* Dedication prefixed to the ſecond volume of *The Divine Legation of* Moſes, &c. publiſhed 1758. p. 5.

the application of a *charm*, which uſually operates in the other extreme; and, in the ſhape of *political ſpectacles*, repreſents the public as *too good to need reformation*; a ſort of *viſion* which, of courſe, ends in a perfect conformity to the principles and manners in faſhion, and not ſeldom puts the *reſtored fanatic* in a hopeful way of recovering with advantage, whatever he was in danger of loſing, by perſiſting in his former *rêverie*.

Our ſage adviſers will, no doubt, ſuggeſt that there is a middle way between the two extremes; and that a man of prudence and probity, having tried his talent at reforming without ſucceſs, may well ſit down contented, enjoy his own opinion, and practiſe his own virtue in ſome corner out of the way of temptation, and, for the reſt, leave others, who are willing to take the public as they find it, to make their beſt of it.

To this ſober counſel, I, for my own part, ſhould have the leſs objection, could I be ſatisfied, that a *neutral* character in matters concerning public reformation, where talents are vouchſafed, though ever ſo ſparingly, were to be juſtified; and particularly where, as in this country, every man may, within decent reſtrictions, *publiſh*, as well as *enjoy*, his own opinion.

There are certain provinces and ſtations, where, if the public really wants to be reformed, they who occupy them, muſt be at ſome trouble in ſtifling their own convictions, before they

they can lie down *peaceably* in the repoſe of a *neutrality*. To many of theſe provinces belong conſiderable degrees of influence and authority, ſufficient to give weight and ſucceſs to ſeaſonable and ſpirited remonſtrances. And they who are in the loweſt ſtations of watchmen and labourers, may bear their teſtimony, perhaps with more advantage than may be apprehended by thoſe, who conſider not, from whom we are to look for the *increaſe* of what is *planted* or *watered* by *any* hand. And wherever the obligation exiſts, I ſhould think it can hardly be removed out of view, without opening the proſpect of ſome diſcomfort, at that awful period when every man's final account ſhall be called for.

But indeed, indolent *neutrality* is not a common, and hardly a poſſible effect of the cure performed upon *idle* and *viſionary* reformers of the public. *Idleneſs*, in the proper ſenſe of the term, is not their failing. They are commonly perſons of active and lively ſpirits, who are not eaſy under want of employment. Their inexperience leads them into ſanguine hopes, that fame, honours, and rewards muſt crown their labours. It is inconceiveable to them, that where the public is ſo groſsly and notoriouſly wrong, it ſhould not acknowledge its obligations to thoſe who intereſt themſelves to ſet it right, by the moſt ſubſtantial inſtances of its gratitude. And

this is the *idle* part of the character, in the figurative ſenſe.

But when the aſtoniſhed viſionary finds his miſtake, and perceives that public error of the moſt palpable kind, has its champions ready armed at all points, and prepared to diſpute every inch of ground with him, — that nothing would be got by the unequal conflict but diſgrace, contempt, and poverty; human nature, and an impatience to be figuring with eclat, commonly bring him over, without much heſitation, to the ſurer ſide; where he ſets himſelf to act the part of a *true proſelyte*, that is to ſay, to *reform backwards*, with a violence and precipitation proportioned to the ſuſpicions his new allies might entertain of his hankering after his old deviations, ſhould he not give the moſt ſpirited proofs of his effectual converſion.

Were not the ſubject of too ſerious a nature, (for the particulars above are to be underſtood of reformation and reformers of religious matters) and were not the *Dramatis perſonæ* of too ſolemn a caſt to be exhibited in *Comedy*, one might give very diverting inſtances of this kind of frailty, in more than one of thoſe who have not only affected, with a kind of philoſophical grimace, to ridicule their own former conduct as *idle* and *viſionary*, but alſo, to fill up the meaſure of their merit with their party, have been the forwardeſt to *expoſe*, *reprobate*, and to the utmoſt of their

their Goodwill, *perſecute* thoſe who perſiſt in this epidemical folly.

The *perſiſters* indeed are but few; and no wonder. All their diſcouragements conſidered, they may be ſaid, like *Abraham*, *againſt hope, to believe in hope*. In the firſt ranks of their adverſaries appear thoſe who enjoy plentiful emoluments from the *nature* and *conſtruction* of the *eſtabliſhment*, who are therefore concerned to defend every thing belonging to it, not becauſe it is *true*, or *reaſonable*, or *righteous* in itſelf, or with reſpect to the deſign of the *Goſpel*, but becauſe *it is eſtabliſhed*. With litigants of this complexion, arguments drawn from reaſon, from ſcripture, from the moſt notorious facts, are of no force. When *particular* anſwers fail them, they have general ones at hand, which do their buſineſs effectually. Public authority, long poſſeſſion, the concurrence of the majority, the danger to public peace from attempts to innovate, &c. &c. &c. have ſuch a formidable appearance, even in the eyes of ſome of the warmeſt friends of Reformation, that they will often ſhudder at the temerity of their own champions, when they conſider with whom, and with what they are to engage, and (ſuch are the effects of this kind of intimidation) will ſuppreſs their own ſpeculations, to avoid ſuſpicions of being connected with a ſet of men, whom the nature and tenor of ſuch anſwers, go near to

ſtigmatize with ſomething more heinous than faction and ſedition.

This whole caſe with its ſeveral appendages, it ſet forth by Mr. *Bayle* in ſo maſterly a manner, that I cannot reſiſt the temptation of giving a pretty long extract from him, without any fear however of diſguſting the ſenſible reader with the prolixity of it, for which the juſtneſs of that great man's ſentiments upon ſo intereſting a ſubject, will make him ample amends, as well as furniſh me with ſome reflections ariſing from the caſe as ſtated by *Bayle*, compared with the Conduct of the anti-reformers in our own country.

John de Launoi, a *Pariſian* doctor of the *Sorbonne*, having, in the courſe of his learned diſquiſitions, found out the falſehood of many legends and traditions concerning the ſaints who were honoured with places in the popiſh calendars, made no ſcruple to publiſh his diſcoveries, and in conſequence of them, to propoſe, that theſe imaginary beings might be expunged from thoſe Calendars, Martyrologies, &c. as occaſioning an highly criminal ſuperſtition in thoſe who paid religious adoration to them. He even ventured to attack the angelic doctor *Aquinas*, as chargeable with great ignorance, or great inſincerity, in building his arguments againſt heterodoxy, upon fabulous traditions.

One *Baron* a Jacobine friar, undertook the defence of *Aquinas*, maintaining, that " the tradi-

" tions

" tions he built upon had been derived from " primitive times; that *Launoi's* reſearches and " concluſions, were the employment of a prag- " matical genius, more concerned to obtain a " great than a good name; that *Launoi* ought, " like St. *Thomas*, to have let things alone when " they were well; and that, admitting ſome of " theſe traditions were of doubtful authority, or " even fabulous, *Launoi* ſhould have paid a pro- " per regard to that maxim of the phyſicians, " *Malum bene poſitum ne moveto.*" Which being transferred into Divinity, ſignifies, that, *falſe traditions, which do not hurt faith, and promote piety, ought to be retained, and not diſturbed.* Upon which Mr. *Bayle*, thus reaſons.

" If all the circumſtances ſet forth by this *Jaco-* " *bine* were true, there is no doubt but *John de* " *Launoi* was deſervedly condemned, as one, who " to make himſelf talked of, and to ſatisfy his " ill nature, would oppoſe many general opini- " ons, which had obtained time out of mind, to " the advancement of piety, without detriment " to the faith. ———

——— " But this is not the caſe of our *Sor-* " *bonne* doctor. The traditions he oppoſes, " have no good title, and his arguments a- " gainſt them are unanſwerable. Now, in this " caſe, it is plain there is all the right in the " world to bring the moſt general and ancient

" opinions, to a trial, eſpecially when their falſity " keeps up a criminal devotion.

" I deſire it may be obſerved, that the reaſon- " ings of this doctor were of ſuch force, as to " undeceive abundance of people; but yet the " abuſes have not been removed. Things re- " main upon the ſame foot in *Provence* *, and " elſewhere. They tell you ſtill the ſame ſtories " they told your anceſtors, and you ſee the ſame " worſhip and the ſame ceremonies. This proves " the difference there is, betwixt private perſons " and the public. Particular people are moſt of " them, one time or other, undeceived, and yet " the practice of the public remains the ſame."

After which Mr. Bayle brings ſome parallel inſtances from *Cicero*, and *Juvenal*, to ſhew that public inſtitutions in the *Roman* ſtate, kept their ground againſt the conviction even of a majority. And then goes on thus.

" There is no likelihood that they who follow " the ſteps of *John de Launoi*, can do any ſervice, " whilſt things are only carried on by way of " literary diſpute. The patrons of falſe devotion " will never recede. They find their account " too much in not bating an ace, and they are " powerful enough to ſecure themſelves from " any violence. The court of Rome will ſecond " and ſupport them. The Romiſh church ſeems

* Where a fictitious *Mary Magdalen* is worſhiped as the converter of the country.

" to

" to have adopted the religion of the god TER-
" MINUS of the Roman republic. This god ne-
" ver yielded a title, no not to *Jupiter* himſelf;
" which was a ſign, ſaid they, that the *Roman*
" people ſhould never recede, nor yield an inch
" of ground to their enemies. If any Pope ſhould
" be willing to ſacrifice ſomething to the reuni-
" on of the ſchiſmatics, ſome inſignificant devo-
" tions, ſome ſuperannuated traditions, he might
" apprehend as great a murmur againſt him, as
" the heathens made againſt the ſcandalous
" peace of the emperor *Jovian*."

He then proceeds to give ſome modern inſtances of the bad ſucceſs of Reformers. — Of the Jeſuit *Papebroch*, and his aſſiſtants, " who at-
" tempted to purge the *Acta Sanctorum* of many
" fabulous and ſcandalous particulars, for which
" ſervice the *Carmelites* and other monks pro-
" cured ſeveral volumes of the ſaid *Acts* ſo purg-
" ed, to be burned by the Inquiſition of *Toledo*."
— Of Father *Mabillon*, who " having laid down
" ſome very good rules concerning the worſhip
" of ſome ſaints, and the judgment to be made
" of relics; — was anſwered, *Phyſician heal thy-*
" *ſelf*; — reform firſt the worſhip paid in ſome
" houſes of your order of St. *Benedict* to ſaints
" as dubious as any. He was likewiſe told of
" the injury he did the church, and the advan-
" tage he gave to Proteſtants." —— Laſtly of Mr. *Thiers*, who " ſet up againſt falſe relics, ex-
" amined

"amined where the bodies of martyrs lay, — "publiſhed ſome diſſertations upon the *holy tear* "of *Vendôme*, and upon St. *Firmin*. All, ſays "M. *Bayle*, was loſt labour. The King's "council ſuppreſſed his book about St. *Firmin*, "as the biſhop of *Amiens* had condemned a "letter he had publiſhed upon the ſame queſti- "on."

Mr. *Bayle's* concluding reflection is as follows. "The fruits of a diſcreet zeal are deſtroyed in "the bud. They build upon this principle, "that it is dangerous to abrogate old cuſtoms; "that boundaries ought not to be removed; "and that, according to the old proverb, we "ſhould *leave the minſter where we find it*. The "proſperity of the Chriſtian *Rome*, juſt like that "of the Pagan *Rome*, is founded upon the pre- "ſervation of ancient rites. Conſecrations muſt "be complied with; religion will allow no alter- "ation in them, *ſed illa mutari vetat religio, et* "*conſecratis utendum eſt*. *In our days*, ſaid a ſub- "prior of St. *Anthony*, let us beware of innova- "tions."

We ſee then how it is. How numerous, how well diſciplined the forces that are brought into the field againſt *reformers*; how able the generals that head them, and how determined the whole body not to yield an inch even to the united powers of piety, truth, and common ſenſe.

But,

But, methinks, I hear a zealous anti-reformer, ſteady to his point, and not eaſily diſconcerted, expoſtulating with me to the following effect.

"We ſee, indeed, from this repreſentation of "Mr. *Bayle*, *how it is*; but only, *how it is* in "*popiſh* countries. Do not Proteſtant churches "reprobate ſaint-worſhip of all ſorts? Have we "any ſuch inſtances among us of groſs idolatry, "as that of worſhiping an imaginary ſaint? And "can you pretend, there are any errors or cor-"ruptions in the church of *England*, any thing "like to have ſo ill an effect upon the people, as "the ſhameful ſuperſtitions attacked by the "*French* reformers above-mentioned? On ano-"ther hand, is it fair to put the reformed "churches, and particularly the church of *Eng-*"*land*, which pretend to no infallibility, and "which are founded upon principles of Chri-"ſtian liberty, upon the ſame footing of obſti-"nacy with the church of *Rome*, the very genius "and ſpirit of which excludes all examination, "and all right of private judgment? And is it "not upon record, that the church of *England* "hath made alterations in her public forms, "and doth ſhe not declare that ſhe is ready to "make them again, upon juſt and weighty oc-"caſions?"

To the firſt part of this remonſtrance I anſwer, that neither *Launoi*, *Papebroch*, *Mabillon*, nor *Thiers*, made the leaſt queſtion about the lawful-

neſs

neſs of worſhiping thoſe whom they eſteemed to be *real* ſaints, or venerating what could be proved to be *true* relics. They ſaw not the leaſt idolatry or ſuperſtition in either practice. And it being preſuppoſed by them, that ſaint-worſhip was both lawful and edifying, I apprehend, it would not be of much ſignificance, with reſpect either to the piety or moral principles of the people, that they were under the deluſion which theſe reformers endeavoured to remove. Mr. *Bayle*, indeed, calls it a *criminal* devotion; but, upon principles which he hath well explained elſewhere, it could not be criminal in the party who intended his worſhip to a *real* ſaint. If a *French* papiſt was perſuaded that his prayers to St. *Firmin* or St. *Renatus* were as properly directed as thoſe he made to St. *Peter* or St. *Paul*, his inward ſpirit of devotion would be no leſs zealous and ſincere in the one caſe than in the other; nor would the merit of it ſuffer any diminution on account of a miſtake of which he was not, nor could be made ſenſible. And this is the circumſtance which gives all its worth to Father *Baron's* maxim, *Malum bene poſitum ne moveto.*

The caſe, indeed, is different, when you aſcend from the common people to their governors and directors, who were conſcious of the deluſion, and ſtill kept it up, or who were capable judges of *Launoi's* reaſonings, and refuſed to examine

them. But even here it would be difficult, perhaps, to ſtate the comparative guilt of popiſh and proteſtant rulers in the like circumſtances, within their reſpective departments; and the whole (as it ſeems to me at leaſt) would turn upon the true anſwer to this ſingle queſtion, whether certain particulars which are *equally* proved to want reformation among proteſtants, have not as ill an effect upon a proteſtant people, while they continue unreformed, as the miſtake of a falſe ſaint for a true one, has upon a papiſt, who believes ſaint-worſhip to be an indiſpenſable duty? I forbear to give inſtances, though there are more than one at hand.

With reſpect to the ſecond member of the expoſtulation above, I would beg leave to obſerve, that Mr. *Bayle's* ſpeculations are founded upon the nature and genius of religious eſtabliſhments in general. Nor can the church of *England* take it amiſs to be ranked with the church of *Rome*, nor the church of *Rome* to be ranked with a Pagan eſtabliſhment, ſo far as the parallel *really* and *in fact* will hold. To me there does not appear one conſideration which impeached the prudence, or obſtructed the ſucceſs of *Launoi*, *Mabillon*, or *Thiers*, that would not operate equally to the diſreputation and diſappointment of an Engliſh Proteſtant Reformer. In all *excluſive* eſtabliſhments, where temporal emoluments are annexed to the profeſſion of a

certain

certain ſyſtem of doctrines, and the uſage of a certain *routine* of forms, and appropriated to an order of men ſo and ſo qualified, that order of men will naturally think themſelves *intereſted* that things ſhould continue as they are. A reformation might endanger their emoluments. For though it ſhould only begin with ſuch things as are moſt notoriouſly amiſs, the alteration of which would no way affect their temporal intereſts, yet, by opening a door to farther inquiry (which would be the natural effect of it), their dignities and revenues might poſſibly be brought into queſtion, and be thought to need ſome regulations, which it can hardly be ſuppoſed they would approve. So that they who aſk, *Who knows where a reformation may end?* by way of giving a reaſon why it ſhould not be begun, are certainly not *unwiſe in their generation.* A man of ſenſe, though he may love his money better than any thing elſe, may nevertheleſs be capable of diſcerning the particulars where a reformation is wanted.

For the reſt, the clergy of proteſtant eſtabliſhments have been protected in their oppoſition to innovations by the higher powers, as well as *monks* and *augurs.* The commonalty in our own country, as far as ever I could ſee, are kept in their prejudices and adherence to their preſent forms, by the ſame conſiderations and ways of arguing that attach the vulgar in other countries

to

to things of a worſe complexion*. We have an example in the renowned *Tillotſon*, what *murmurs* the preſiding character in our church experienced, upon giving way to a reformation of our public forms and ſervices, though in the leaſt important particulars. The arguments againſt a reform, taken from *poſſeſſion* and *antiquity*, and the expedience of adhering to ancient rites, have been as often and as warmly urged by ſome proteſtants in *England*, as by the orthodox in foreign lands. How dextrous we are at *recrimination*, the late Mr. *White's* Letters to a *Diſſenting Gentleman* remain a memorable and ſtanding evidence. Father *Mabillon* himſelf could not hear more of the advantage he gave to Proteſtants, than the authors of the *Free and Candid Diſquiſitions* have been told of the countenance they gave to the Engliſh Proteſtant Diſſenters †. And I am not

* See Biſhop *Beverege's* Latin Sermon before the Convocation, 1689. and moſt of the Sermons at *Hutchins's* Lecture.

† "This book of yours [The Free and Candid Diſquiſitions] will be a means to leſſen very much the credit and "eſtimation of the church of *England* in the eyes of many of its "members, as well as to confirm and encourage the diſſenters "in their preſent ways, perhaps alſo to increaſe the number of "them. ——Your Diſquiſitions, doubtleſs, will be conſidered "as a grand Arſenal, ſtored with ordnance of almoſt all ſorts, "fit to attack the church of *England*, which our adverſaries, no "doubt, will thank you for, and have recourſe to, upon all "occaſions." *Free and impartial Conſiderations on the Free and Candid Diſquiſitions*, by Mr. White, p. 59, 60.

certain

certain that he would be miſtaken, who ſhould affirm of the church of *England* (what *Luther* did of the church of *Rome**) that the remonſtrances of theſe *Diſquiſitors* have rendered the church more firm and inflexible, even with reſpect to ſome particulars which ſeemed to be given up on all hands, till they were pointed out for reformation by theſe *idle* and *viſionary* men.

To what the alterations that have been made in our eccleſiaſtical ſyſtem amount, and conſequently how far the church may be diſpoſed to a further reformation upon juſt and weighty occaſions, will be ſeen by and by.

Here is more than ſufficient, one would think, to deter a reformer, who is able and deliberate enough to *count the coſt*, from ever meddling with public error, even with more than half the courage of *Luther*. A man muſt be in a very uncommon ſituation, as well as of an uncommon ſpirit, even in this land of liberty, who is bold enough to undertake the patronage of a cauſe, to which ſo many, at different periods, have fallen martyrs. Not always, indeed, by fire and ſword,

* Verum concordiam fidei, ſeu doctrinæ, fruſtra quærit *Eraſmus*, eo conſilio ut mutuum cedamus et condonemus, non tantum quod adverſarii prorſus nihil cedunt, nec cedere volunt, quin potius rigidius et obſtinatius nunc omnia defendunt quam unquam antea, etiam talia auſi nunc exigere, quæ ante *Lutherum* ipſimet damnaverant, et reprobaverant. *Luther* apud *Seckendorf*, lib. iii. p. 53.

but

but oftener, perhaps, by what kills as ſurely, though not ſo quickly, hunger and nakedneſs.

For the misfortue is that the malady of reforming the public, is moſt apt to ſeize upon thoſe, whoſe profeſſion leads them to a more intimate ſtudy of the holy ſcriptures: whoſe views in life, and, ordinarily, whoſe ſcanty circumſtances require, that they ſhould preſerve ſome credit with their eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors, in order to procure themſelves a decent maintenance. Nothing can be more fatal to ſuch than a mutinous ſpirit of reformation. They are *marked* of courſe as *forbidden* and *contraband* men. A ſprightly academic was one day making ſome free obſervations upon the Canons, before an eminent ſage of the law: "Beware, young man, ſays the prudent "counſellor, of the *holy office*, and remember that "there are *ſtarving*, as well as *burning* Inquiſi-"tions."

But after all, they who can get above theſe alarming conſiderations, or who are in a ſituation not to be affected by them, will not be abſolutely deſtitute of ſome gleams of hope and comfort, over and beſides what reſults from the inward teſtimony of having done their duty.

Mr. *Bayle*, as the reader hath ſeen, obſerved, that "the reaſonings of Dr. *Launci*, had force e-"nough to convince abundance of people," and thoſe of courſe, people of the beſt ſenſe, and the moſt rational piety. So, no doubt, hath it hap-

pened to the pleaders for a farther reformation in our own church, many of whom have been not a whit behind the *Sorbonne*-doctor, either in the evidence of facts, or in the force of their reaſoning. Nor is it unreaſonable to preſume, that as farther develloppments are made, the number of the *convinced* muſt be increaſed.

The weakneſs of the few anſwers that have been made to the important remonſtrances of ſerious and judicious men on the article of a farther reformation, and the ſupercilious contempt with which the moſt reſpectful, as well as the moſt reaſonable of them have been paſſed by, muſt detract ſomething from the eſtimation of thoſe whom the thinking part of mankind will ſuppoſe to be chiefly concerned to take notice of them. It will look like a combination to adhere to the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem, for ſome *political* purpoſes not fit to be owned; while no ſollicitude is perceived to relieve the reaſonable ſcruples of conſcientious diſſenters, or to conſult the real neceſſities of our own people by ſubſtituting, in the room of hackneyed, and not always juſtifyable forms, more intelligible, as well as more animating methods of public worſhip, and public edification.

To be plainer ſtill, this temper and conduct in a ſet of men, many of whom make it appear, on other occaſions, that they want neither learning nor capacity to form an accurate judgment

on

on ſo intereſting a caſe, will hardly allow us to think them in earneſt in their weekly exhortations to chriſtian piety and virtue, or the zeal they occaſionally expreſs for the proteſtant religion and government. Their doctrine, contraſted by their practice, will look to the diſcerning part of the public, as if nothing was meant by theſe terms, in *their* mouths, but mere conformity to an eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, and a reſolution to ſupport and defend that at all events, with, or without reaſon.

But if ever the maſk ſhould fall off in ſome future ſkirmiſh *, (the probable and frequent effect of a rivalſhip for temporal honours and emoluments) and one of the parties ſhould be reduced to the neceſſity of leaning upon the friends of reformation, by way of balance to the other;

* This was once very near being the caſe, when, in the memorable year 1745, two of our leading churchmen could not agree, whether, upon the received ſyſtem of divinity, the *Rebellion* then on foot, was to be conſidered as a judgment upon the *ſtate*, or only upon *particulars*. The difference, however, was happily compromiſed in the following manner. —— "In "the mean time, moſt polemic Sir, let us agree in this, however "different we may go in other matters, TO REVERENCE AND "SUPPORT OUR HAPPY CONSTITUTION. And that I may "bring the matter as near to you [*might he not have added*, "and to myſelf,] as I can, what *other* conſtitution but this, let "me aſk you, would have heaped *Chancellorſhips, Archdeacon-"ries, Prebends*, &c. with ſo liberal a hand, and on ſo worthy "a ſubject?" —— This was an argument *ad utrumque*, which would admit of no demur, and ſo, we may ſuppoſe, they ſhaked hands, and parted friends.

'tis then that the labours of theſe *idle* and *viſionary* men may come to have their weight, and ſome of thoſe, at leaſt, who are now pining away in a deſponding obſcurity, under the frowns of their diſobliged ſuperiors, may poſſibly live to ſee the way they have been preparing, gradually opening to the accompliſhment of what all well informed chriſtians and conſiſtent Proteſtants have been ſo long and ſo ardently wiſhing for in vain.

But let this happen when it will, the church will not get half ſo much credit by a reformation into which ſhe is compelled by an unwelcome neceſſity, as would attend her undertaking it freely and of her own bounty; and there is one conſideration above all others, in which her honour is intimately concerned, that ſhould diſpoſe her to think of it ſeriouſly.

It is an objection which, by turns, has been made to all the reformed eſtabliſhments in *Europe*, that their reſpective plans are too narrow and circumſcribed; nor is it to be denied, that along with all their profeſſions of aſſerting chriſtian liberty, they have, more or leſs, impoſed upon their members, certain doctrines and modes of worſhip, for which they have no other than human authority.

When this is objected to any of them, as inconſiſtent with their original foundation, the holy ſcriptures, they conſtantly appeal to the practice of each other, as a common juſtification of them all;

all; as if that were ſufficient to preclude all appeals to any other authority.

The learned and excellent Dr. *Moſheim* hath complimented the church of *England*, with the title of, *The chief and leading branch of that great community, which goes under the denomination of the* REFORMED CHURCH *. What preſcriptive or equitable right the church of *England* has to this preference, I ſhall not ſtay to inquire. It is ſufficient for my purpoſe that ſhe accepts the compliment, having, indeed, paid it to herſelf an hundred times †. And yet, when her own unſcriptural

* See his *Compendious View of Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, tranſlated by Dr. *Archibald Maclaine*, lately publiſhed for *Millar*, vol. ii. p. 575. —— a work for which the *chriſtian*, as well as the *literary* commonwealth, is highly obliged both to the author and tranſlator; as it is calculated to correct, with a very ſingular impartiality, though, at the ſame time, with great candour and tenderneſs, the falſe and deluſive views in which the religious conduct of our forefathers has been placed, both with reſpect to facts and ſyſtems.

† "We think, ſays a learned Biſhop, our own church the "beſt; every body thinks it far from the worſt." — "The "*Lutherans*, ſays another (if another) prefer it to the *Calviniſt* "communion, the *Calviniſts* to the *Lutheran*, and the *Greeks* to "both." — Which is explained to mean, that every one thinks the church of *England*, the next beſt to his own. "But this, "ſays Dr. *Mayhew*, is ſaid without proof." *Second Defence*, p. 6. — And mark what a *bitter pill* the Doctor gives us in the room of this *ſweetmeat*, with which we treat ourſelves. "There "is indeed, ſays he, *one* church, a very ancient and extenſive "one, which it may naturally be concluded, for a reaſon that "ſhall be nameleſs, conſiders the communion of the church of

impoſitions come to be objected to her, ſhe hath the condeſcenſion to alledge in her defence, the uſages of proteſtant churches abroad, nay hath ſometimes been humble enough to take ſhelter under the diſſenting churches at home, — thoſe very aſſemblies, which, on other occaſions, ſhe hath refuſed to acknowledge as ſiſter churches; a degree of humility, in my poor opinion, much below the dignity of a *leading* church, which ſurely ſhould maintain her ground, and vindicate her practice by *original* authority, without accepting any ſupplemental aid from the examples of thoſe, whom in every other light, ſhe looks upon as ſomething leſs than her inferiors.

But would the church of *England*, indeed, perfectly atchieve this honour of being the leader and chief of all reformed churches? The way is open. Let her be the *firſt* to remove every ſtumbling block out of the way of her weak (if ſo ſhe will needs call them) but conſcientious fellow-chriſtians. Let her nobly and generouſly aboliſh and diſavow, all impoſitions, all bonds, and yokes, all beggarly elements, diſagreeable to the ſpirit and deſign of chriſtianity. Let her remove all grounds of ſuſpicion of her hankering after *Romiſh* ſuperſtition, by renouncing every

" England the next beſt to her own," *Obſerv.* p. 127. For my part, I ſhould think we are well off, if, for this *nameleſs* reaſon, all other Proteſtants do not think our church the *worſt* but one.

rite,

rite, ordinance, and ceremony, which may nouriſh this jealouſy among the diſſenters, and for which ſhe is driven to make apologies that ſo remarkably contraſt her pretenſions to an authority to *decree* them. Let her do this, and ſet the glorious example to the other Proteſtant churches of *Europe*, and then will ſhe be juſtly intituled to thoſe encomiums, which, while ſhe aſſumes them in her preſent ſituation, will only paſs with the judicious for the meaneſt of all mean things, *ſelf-adulation*.

But to wave our ſpeculations for the preſent, and to come to a few plain facts. Let us take a curſory view of the ſteps taken, by authority, to reform the church of *England*, after the ſettlement of it by Queen *Elizabeth's* Act of uniformity.

Elizabeth would enter into no treaty with the old puritans to alter or reform any thing. They were delivered over to *Parker* and *Whitgift*, for correction *only*; which the latter exerciſed with ſo unfeeling an hand, and ſo far beyond his legal powers, that, upon the Queen's demiſe, he began to be terribly frighted at the approach of K. *James's* firſt parliament; and it is probable enough his apprehenſions haſtened his death.

He lived, however, to be preſent at the *Hampton-Court* conference, where all objections were happily ſilenced by the commodious maxim, of, *No biſhop, no king*. The whole affair ended with

extravagant compliments to the royal moderator, which ſome people, who were not puritans, thought chriſtian biſhops ſhould not have carried ſo far.

Barlow's account of it, might well enough have been called, *A Farce of three Acts*, as it *was played by his majeſty's ſervants at* Hampton-Court, &c. But it proved to be no farce to the poor conſcientious puritans, with whom *James* faithfully kept his promiſe, *viz.* that "if they would "not conform, he would *harry them out of the* "*land, and even do worſe* *." Accordingly many of theſe worthy confeſſors found it more eligible to quit their country, and to ſeek their peace in an uncultivated deſart, than abide the fury of the biſhops. And when they, who firſt fled to *New England*, had made this a comfortable aſylum, the authority of government was moſt cruelly interpoſed, to deprive thoſe who would have followed their brethren, of this relief, that the biſhops might not loſe the ſatisfaction of tormenting them at home †. And afterwards, when, in the reign of *Charles* I, theſe refugees began to be happy and proſperous, the malicious *Laud*, that they might reap no advantages from their in-

* *Fuller's* Church Hiſt. B. X. p. 19. and *Heylin's* Hiſtory of of the preſbyterians, B. XI. p. 376.

† See *Pierce's* Vindication, Part I. p. 170, 171. *Tindal's* Rapin, 8vo. 1731, vol. IX. p. 312.--395. *Maccauley*, vol. I. p. 67. But above all, *Willſon*, p. 74.

duſtry,

duſtry, commercial genius, and chriſtian liberty, contrived to cramp their trade by fooliſh proclamations *, and, to complete their mortification, was upon the point of ſending them a BISHOP with a military force to back his authority, if the Scots had not found him other buſineſs †.

Fuller tells us, humouroufly enough, that, after the *Hampton-Court* conference, "many *cripples* in "conformity were cured of their *halting* therein, "and ſuch who knew not *their own*, till they "knew the *King's mind* in this matter, for the "future quietly digeſted the ceremonies of the "church §."

It is more than probable, that *James* himſelf was one of theſe *cripples*, till he talked with his biſhops; the time had been, when he could no more digeſt theſe ceremonies, than his new puritan ſubjects, and when he talked againſt thoſe of the church of *England*, in particular, with ſcorn and contempt ‖.

No doubt, but, upon the event of this *conference* there was a conſiderable *falling off*. So it will always be in ſuch caſes, even with thoſe who *know their own minds* well enough. *Bancroft* pretended to *Spotſwood*, Archbiſhop of St. *Andrews*,

* *Ruſhworth*, ſecond part, p. 718.

† *Heylin's* Life of *Laud*, p. 369.

§ *Fuller's* Church Hiſtory, B. X. p. 21.

‖ He called the Engliſh Liturgy, "an evil ſaid maſs in "Engliſh; which wanted nothing of the maſs but the lift-"ings." *Calderwood*, apud *Harris*, p. 25.

that

that "when the rolls were called of thoſe who "ſtood out, and were depoſed, which was ſome "years after, they were found to be *forty-nine* in "all England, whereas the miniſters in that "kingdom are reckoned nine thouſand and a-"bove *."

Bancroft probably forgot to tell his brother *Spotſwood*, how many ſhiploads he had terrified into the plantations. It might be too, that he found no more than *forty-nine*, whom he held it *ſafe* to perſecute; poor friendleſs and moneyleſs men, who had nothing wherewithal to buy off their cenſures, nor any patrons to protect them. There are authentic accounts, that the Nonconformiſt miniſters were not ſo thin ſown even in *Bancroft's* reign.

But perhaps a little anecdote, preſerved by a ſenſible and candid conformiſt, may help us to account for this groſs miſrepreſentation. "In "the year 1669, ſays he, we had ſeveral articles "ſent down to the clergy, with private orders to "*ſome*, to make the conventiclers as few and in-"conſiderable as might be. The eighth and laſt "was this, *Whether you do think, they might be eaſi-"ly ſuppreſt by the aſſiſtance of the civil magi-"ſtrate* †?"

* *Spotſwood's* Hiſt. of the Church of *Scotland*, p. 479. and Heylin's Hiſt. of the Preſbyt. p. 376. *Calderwood* ſays, that the number of ſilenced, and deprived miniſters, on that occaſion, were 300. *Altare Damaſcenum* Præfat.

† Conformiſts plea for Nonconformiſts, Part 1. p. 40.

This

This was a caſt of *Sheldon's* politics, the ſyſtem of which he took from thoſe excellent originals, *Bancroft* and *Laud*. It would not have looked well to the *civil magiſtrate* to do the *Hierarchical drudgery* of the prelates, while the nonconformiſts were eſteemed conſiderable for their numbers and quality. Even *Charles's* miniſters might have boggled at this.

But *Spotſwood's* reflection upon *Bancroft's* report, muſt not be forgot. "Such a noiſe, ſays "he, will a few diſturbers make, in any ſociety "where they are tolerated." Experience hath ſhewn, that the more ſuch diſturbers are *tolerated*, the leſs noiſe they make. But *Spotſwood*, by the word *tolerated*, meant, *ſuffered to live*. Nothing like a halter to make a man ceaſe his noiſe!

What the puritans aimed at, and hoped to obtain by this conference, may be ſeen in that excellent reſcript called the *millenary petition*, preſerved by *Fuller* (no bad model for a reformation even in theſe days); what they did obtain, was impriſonment, depoſition, and exile.

The violence with which the ruling biſhops drove on during this and the firſt part of the ſucceeding reign, (over which a good natured man would throw a cloak, if he could find one large enough to cover it) loſt them firſt their ſeats in parliament, and afterwards their whole epiſcopal authority.

Of thoſe great and wiſe men who compoſed the parliament of 1641, (and greater, or wiſer, or more of them at one time, *England* never ſaw) all were not of one mind, with reſpect to the biſhops.

Some thought that particular delinquents being puniſhed for examples, the order might remain, with ſuch limitations, as would prevent its being miſchievous for the time to come.

With this view, archbiſhop *Uſher* drew up his plan of *the reduction of Epiſcopacy*, and would the biſhops have contented themſelves with the powers reſerved to them in that plan, ſome have ſuppoſed they might have ſaved themſelves, and very probably the king.

But they were wiſer. They ſuppoſed the king was intereſted in their preſervation, and that if ever the crown ſhould recover the prerogative claimed by *James* I. and *Charles* I. epiſcopacy muſt riſe again with that, in all its pomp and luſtre, and in a condition to bring all thoſe who had or ſhould oppoſe it, to effectual repentance; and in this, ſuch of the biſhops as lived to the year 1662, found they had not been miſtaken.

This may be called the ſecond attempt to reform the church of *England*. Whether it miſcarried for having in it too much, or too little epiſcopacy, would be hard to ſay.

The *third* was the *Savoy* conference 1661. Charles II, impatient to accompliſh his reſtoration,

tion, and having ſome miſgivings, ſuggeſted probably by Lord *Clarendon*, that the anti-epiſcopal party might ſtill be ſtrong enough to give him much uneaſineſs, publiſhed a declaration at *Breda*, giving the preſbyterians to underſtand two things, which were never intended to be carried into execution, but upon the extremeſt compulſion. 1. A quite new model of the church of *England*. 2. Where this ſhould fall ſhort of ſatisfying tender conſciences, all poſſible eaſe and relief, by a large and comprehenſive toleration.

Charles ſoon found that the diſſenters were in no condition to moleſt him. Nevertheleſs, as the royal word was given *twice over*, ſome ſhew muſt be made of keeping it. And this produced the *Savoy* conference ſo called; a complication of ſophiſtry, hypocriſy, and virulence on the part of the orthodox, hardly to be paralleled in popiſh hiſtory.

Clarendon, *Sheldon*, and *Morley* were the conductors of the *Drama*, the two latter true ſons of *Bancroft* and *Laud*. *Clarendon* paſſes with many for a man of integrity, ſeduced, in this inſtance, partly by his own prejudices, partly by the artifices of the biſhops.

Biſhop *Burnet* puts the inflexibility of *Clarendon* towards the nonconformiſts, to the account of his gratitude to the biſhops, for the ſervices they did him in the affair of his daughter's marriage with

with the duke of *York* *. If this was the caſe, and if *Clarendon* was otherwiſe inclined to moderate and healing meaſures, more ſhame for the biſhops who required ſuch a requital.

But upon the ſuppoſition, that Lord *Clarendon* had really the leaſt inclination to relax the terms of conformity in favour of the diſſenters, he muſt have been the moſt diſingenuous man that ever lived. For in the poſthumous hiſtory of his Life, publiſhed 1759, he lays it down for a maxim, that, "nothing but the ſevereſt execution "of the law, can ever prevail upon that claſſis of "men, to conform to government." What could a vindictive prelate of thoſe times have ſaid more?

Be it here noted that Lord *Clarendon* wrote this account of his own Life at *Montpelier*, when he could have no temptation to diſſemble. Did he then, *always* think ſo highly of eſtabliſhed eccleſiaſtical forms, as this maxim imports? Certainly not, if we may judge from two of his eſſays, written likewiſe at *Montpelier*, the one, *On the regard due to antiquity*, the other, *On multiplying controverſies*. However, if any one chuſes to add his Lordſhip to the examples in the laſt chapter of this work, of great churchmen labouring under *invincible prejudices*, I have no objection.

Clarendon's removal from the helm made way for a *fourth* attempt to reform the church of *Eng-*

* Hiſt. O. T. vol. I. p. 260.

land,

land, in the year 1668, in which the undertakers on the ſide of the church were ſincere and hearty. Theſe undertakers were, judge *Hale*, biſhop *Wilkins*, Dr. *Tillotſon* and a few more, with the countenance of the lord keeper *Bridgman*. Names, one may venture to ſay, ſufficient to recommend a plan of reformation, to any chriſtian government.

"But, ſays *Burnet*, what advantage ſoever the "men of comprehenſion might have in any other "reſpect, the majority of the houſe of commons "was ſo poſſeſſed againſt them, that when it was "known in a ſucceeding ſeſſion, that a bill was "ready to be offered to the houſe for that end, "[*drawn by* lord chief juſtice *Hale*] a very ex-"traordinary vote paſſed, that no bill to that "purpoſe, ſhould be received †."

How the houſe of commons came to be ſo *poſſeſſed*, or perhaps, how it came to be known, that ſuch a bill was prepared, is fairly accounted for by the following anecdote.

"Biſhop *Wilkins*, who was a candid, ingenu-"ous, and open hearted man, acquainting biſhop "*Ward* [SETH lord biſhop of *Saliſbury*] with "the whole matter, hoping to have met with "his concurrence in it, he [*Ward*] ſo beſtirred "himſelf, and all his friends, and made ſuch a "party that nothing could be done in it ‡."

† Hiſt. O. T. vol. I. p. 260.

‡ Calamy's Abridgment, p. 322.

This

This ſame biſhop *Ward*, "to get his former "errors to be forgot (for he had complied dur-"ing the late times, and *held in*, by taking the "covenant) went into the high notions of a ſe-"vere conformity, and became the moſt con-"ſiderable man upon the bench *."

To finiſh his character. "He was ſo far in-"cenſed with ſome things contained in the firſt "part of [the learned and truly antipapiſtical] "Dr. *Daniel Whitby's Proteſtant Reconciler*, that "he obliged him to make a retractation." Which, if I had room, I would add in the margin, juſt as it was *impoſed* by this ſteady, *holding-in* biſhop, as it may ſerve for a precedent, in caſe *retractations* ſhould once more come into faſhion. I cannot forbear, however, putting down two of the obnoxious propoſitions *retracted* †.

Some faint attempts towards an accommodation with the proteſtant diſſenters, by abating in the terms of conformity, were afterwards made during the reign of *Charles* II, particularly in the years 1673 and 1674. Popery was then making ſo formidable a progreſs, that even *Morley* and *Ward* were frightened into an appearance, at

* *Burnet*, v. ſ. 192.

† 1. *It is not lawful for ſuperiors to impoſe any thing in the worſhip of God, that is not antecedently neceſſary.*

2. *The duty of not offending a weak brother is inconſiſtent with all human authority of making laws concerning indifferent things.* Qu. Are theſe propoſitions *orthodox*, upon the principles of the ALLIANCE, or are they not? *See*, A ſhort Account of Dr. *Whitby*, p. 6.

leaſt,

leaſt, of deſiring to make room for the nonconformiſts in the church, as an acceſſion of ſtrength againſt the common enemy. *Calamy*, in his abridgment of *Baxter's* hiſtory, hath given ſome particulars, and a ſketch of abatements drawn up by *Baxter*, at the deſire of Lord *Orrery*, in the year 1673 *.

Morley's character is highly painted. "The "biſhop of *Winchester*, that it might not ſeem to "be for nothing that he oft pretended to be of "ſo peaceable a diſpoſition, furthered an *act* on"ly to take off the *aſſent* and *conſent*, [to the "book of common-prayer] and the *renunciation* "of the *covenant*. But when other biſhops were "againſt even this *ſhew* of abatement, he told "them *openly* in the houſe [of lords], that, *had* "*it been but to abate them a ceremony, he would not* "*have ſpoken in it. But he knew they* [the diſ"ſenters] *were bound to the ſame things ſtill by* "*other clauſes or obligations, if theſe were repeal*"*ed* †."

This is ſo black and infamous, that I ſhould hardly blame a *zealous churchman* who ſhould demur to the competency of the evidence, as coming from a diſſenter. There it hath ſtood however, for above fifty years, uncontradicted, as far as I know, by any one.

* From p. 338. to 343.

† Ibid. p. 340.

There is a letter of Dr. *Tillotſon*, not far from this paſſage, in *Calamy's* Abridgment, by which it appears that *Ward* had played *him* much the ſame trick in 1675 that he had played *Wilkins* in 1668, only perhaps with a little more hypocriſy. *Tillotſon* there ſays, that "the projected "bill cannot paſs in either houſe, without the "concurrence of a conſiderable part of the *bi-* "*ſhops*, and the countenance of his majeſty, "which at preſent I ſee little reaſon to ex- "pect *."

The reaſon why theſe two biſhops *Morley* and *Ward* pretended to be ſo often for accommodation, ſeems to have been, to prevent any meetings being held without their knowledge, and conſequently a reformation from coming upon them by ſurprize. No doubt but *Ward* kept in mind, not without ſome degree of horror, how narrowly *Bel and the dragon*, had eſcaped an ambuſcade by the freedom and openneſs of honeſt biſhop *Wilkins*.

The next attempt to reform the church of *England*, had not only the concurrence of ſome worthy biſhops who did real honour to their order, and of a number of pious and learned divines in inferior ſtations; but was undertaken under the auſpicious authority of *William* III. in the year 1689.

* Ibid. p. 343.

By

By a fatal miſtake, it was agreed, that the matter ſhould paſs through the forms of convocation, where it met with an effectual defeat from the zeal, and activity of a faction in the lower houſe, led on indeed, as was ſuſpected, by ſome of the bench, particularly *Mew* and *Sprat*.

Dr. *Birch* brings ſome authentic proofs of biſhop *Compton's* intriguing to have Dr. *Jane* choſen *prolocutor*, in preference to *Tillotſon*, not out of a diſaffection to the cauſe, but to the man *. But he who could put the cauſe in ſo fair a way of being ruined to gratify his own perſonal reſentment, could not be very cordial to it at the bottom.

One ſingle circumſtance will ſerve to characterize the ſpirit and piety of theſe convocation men.

"We, ſay they, being the repreſentatives of "a *formed* eſtabliſhed church, do not think fit to "mention the word RELIGION, any farther than "it is the religion of ſome formed eſtabliſhed "church."

The word for *religion* in the Greek teſtament, is θρησκεια, which is no where appropriated to a formed eſtabliſhed church. *Paul* ſpeaks of *ſects* in the Jewiſh *religion* †, ſome of which were juſt as much *eſtabliſhed*, as the preſbyterians and quakers are in *England*. *James* defines *pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father*, in terms

* Life of *Tillotſon*, p. 179.
† *Acts*. xxvi. 5.

which ſhew, that ſuch religion may be practiſed and conformed to, where there neither is, nor ever was, an eſtabliſhed church *. But this ſort of religion the pious convocation-men *did not think fit to mention.*

Their notion of religion, indeed, hath rather a pagan caſt. *Religionem eam quæ in* METU *et* CÆREMONIA *Deorum ſit, appellant*, ſays *Cicero*. † But another pagan ſeems to have had a more evangelical idea of *religion*. Religioſus, *eſt non modo deorum ſanctitatem magni æſtimans, ſed etiam officioſus adverſus homines* ‡.

One cannot well call the *Free and Candid Diſquiſitions*, relating to the church of *England*, or the excellent *Appeals* which followed them, by the name of attempts to *reform* the church. Theſe were rather attempts to feel the pulſes of the ruling eccleſiaſtics of that time. So, however, matters were managed at that period, that neither the authors, nor the public were the wiſer for thoſe attempts. An ingenious fencer was employed on this occaſion, to parry the home thruſts of theſe reformers, who had the dexterity to handle his weapons ſo, as to appear in the eyes of the ſpectators, to part at leaſt on equal terms with his antagoniſts.

* *James* i. 27.

† De Inventione, ii. 22.

‡ *Feſtus* in verbo, *Religioſus*.

Here then hath TERMINUS fixed his pedeſtal, and here hath he kept his ſtation for two whole centuries. We are juſt where the Acts of uniformity left us, and where, for ought that appears in the temper of the times, the laſt trumpet will find us, — if POPERY will pleaſe to let us be quiet, and leave us to our repoſe with the ſame complaiſance that we have left her to go about and *perform all her functions, without offence and without obſervation.*

Having now given a ſhort ſeries of inſtances of the church of *England's* diſpoſition to reform the exceptionable parts of her conſtitution, I hope I may be indulged in a few remarks upon it.

1. The profeſſed motive of thoſe great churchmen who gave way to any movements towards a reformation before the *revolution*, was not, if you will believe them, any conviction in their own minds, that any circumſtance of doctrine, diſcipline, or worſhip in the eſtabliſhed church, was really wrong. It was always aſſerted, that the church needed no reformation, and only condeſcended to theſe mootings partly to oblige the nonconformiſts with a hearing, and partly to convince them by argument, how little their diſſent was to be juſtified: but might not one ſay with *more* truth, —— much oftner to entertain the church's friends with a triumph after a victory preconcerted with the civil powers?

The divines, indeed, who were employed under King *William's* commiſſion, were free enough in *acknowledging* and *characterizing* the blemiſhes in the church of *England*, at leaſt, if the remaining, tho' imperfect, accounts of that tranſaction may be depended upon. And this has been given as a reaſon, why the *original* papers relating to it have been ſo carefully ſecreted from the public, as hitherto to have eſcaped the moſt diligent inquiries after them.

And this *ſecurity* is, no doubt, one circumſtance which hath given freſh courage to the church of *England*, once more to hold faſt her integrity, and to return to her old poſture of defence, in *memorials*, *ſchiſm-bills*, *alliances*, and other expedients, ſome of which ſhew that even *Bancroft* and *Laud* would not have been diſparaged by learning ſome particulars of church-artifice from more modern maſters of conformity.

2. Another thing the foregoing detail will help us to judge of, is the value of an argument ſuppoſed to be of great weight towards diſculpating our great churchmen in their backwardneſs to promote a reformation; namely, that this matter is in the option of the civil powers, without whoſe concurrence (which perhaps might not be obtained) our moſt dignified clergy could not ſtir a ſtep.

But here I would aſk, what reaſon the clergy of the preſent times can have to doubt of the concurrence

concurrence of the civil powers in the work of reformation? By looking back to former times, we ſee the civil powers have always made it a point to oblige and ſtand by the eſtabliſhed clergy in all their perils; and, in one inſtance, actually fell with them for a ſeaſon. But even then, their days of darkneſs were but few, in compariſon with the proſperity they have enjoyed in the courſe of two centuries. Since when, we have ſeen them riſe from their *light afflictions* with redoubled vigor and advantage, ſo remarkably as to be able to check a reformation againſt the united endeavours of ſome of their own *falſe brethren* in the higheſt ſtations, and the moſt ſanguine diſpoſition in the ſovereign himſelf to effect it.

Nor have we the leaſt reaſon to imagine that their intereſt with the civil powers has declined to this hour. It is not much above ten years ſince the public was told by a great churchman, that "Things were then come to that paſs, that "the ſtate ſeemed to be in more need of the ſup-"port of the clergy, than they of the ſtate's *." The reaſons given for that preſumption ſtill ſubſiſt in their full force: not to mention ſome later appearances which ſeem to tend towards a farther *need*, in no long time. So that it is to be hoped we ſhall hear no more of this plea for the inactivity of the ruling clergy, till full proof is given to the world by a fair and open trial, that

* View of Lord *Bolingbroke's* Philoſophy, 8vo. 1754. p. 5.

their ſincere and zealous endeavours for a farther reformation, are actually controuled by the civil powers.

3. The laſt remark I ſhall make upon the foregoing facts is, that the alterations made in the forms of the church of *England*, inſtead of relieving the ſcruples of conſcientious nonconformiſts, greatly increaſed them. The *Savoy-Conference* has been compared to the council of *Trent*. Both were the effects of an unwelcome neceſſity. In both the obnoxious party preſided, and gave judgment: and the event of both convinced the remonſtrants reſpectively, how vain a thing it was to contend againſt the plenitude of church power, and how much wiſer they had been in their generation, in diſpenſing with things as they ſtood before theſe two *reforming* bodies undertook to *review* them.

I doubt not but the intelligent reader, who is moderately converſant in Engliſh hiſtory from the commencement of the preſent century, will perceive what room is left for purſuing reflections of the ſame ſort through the laſt ſixty years. But, as I may be thought by ſome to have already exceeded the juſt bounds of a preface, I ſhall, for the preſent, content myſelf with a few remarks upon one intereſting circumſtance in our preſent eſtabliſhment, which has not a little employed the ſpeculations of men of the firſt abilities of all parties.

There

There is not, perhaps, an inſtance of a law enacted in a proteſtant community, which is leſs defenſible in a *religious* view, than that of the *ſacramental teſt*, enjoined as a qualification for holding civil offices.

In *Charles* II.'s reign, which gave birth to it, a man who ſhould have propoſed the repeal of this law, with reſpect to *proteſtant diſſenters*, would have paſſed for a *Socinian* at the beſt, perhaps for an *atheiſt*.

In the next reign, the inconveniences, and poſſibly the unrighteouſneſs, of it were ſeen and felt, even by ſome of the great churchmen themſelves, among whom *Sancroft* is named for one; and it was not imagined at that time, but that, upon any ſuch deliverance from popery as the *Revolution*, the proteſtant intereſt would be relieved from ſuch an incumbrance for all future time.

Perhaps, at that particular juncture, little more was conſidered among churchmen, than the ill policy of excluding ſo conſiderable a body of proteſtants, who were, to a man, zealous enemies to popery and arbitrary power, from provinces where they might have ſupported the common cauſe of public liberty, with the beſt effect.

But, after Mr. *Locke's* letters for *toleration* had appeared, it was preſently perceived, tho' the title of them ran only for *toleration*, that his arguments concluded againſt the authority of any Chriſtian

Chriſtian ſociety to preſcribe religious teſts or modes of worſhip, which were not clearly, plainly, and indiſputably agreeable to the ſcriptures, whether with or without the ſanction of the civil magiſtrate *.

The firſt effect of Mr. *Locke's* reaſoning appeared in a very ſenſible *proteſt*, in behalf of the rejected bill for abrogating the ſacramental teſt, in the year 1689. No more, however, could then be obtained but a bare toleration, or exemption of proteſtant diſſenters, from the penalties before laid upon them for holding and frequenting conventicles.

In the reign of Queen *Anne*, the friends of religious liberty were kept under by *church memorials*, and other alarms of the church's danger, calculated to inflame the people, which had all the ſucceſs the party could wiſh. And no wonder, if it be true, what *Swift* tells us in his hiſtory of the four laſt years of the Queen, "that the "whole ſacred order was underſtood to be con-"cerned in the proſecution of *Sacheverel* †.

* It is well and truly obſerved, in the Preface to the laſt beautiful edition of Mr. *Locke's* letters concerning *Toleration*, in quarto, 1765, "that Mr. *Locke* was not the firſt writer on "this ſubject; for that the argument was well underſtood "and publiſhed during the civil war." All, therefore, that is meant by what is ſaid above, is, that the *attention* of the public as well as the ſubject was then *revived*, which may eaſily be accounted for by the eminence and known abilities of the *living* author.

† P. 6.

But

But nothing exhibits a more lively picture of the ſenſe and temper of thoſe times, than the ſeveral attempts in favour of a Law againſt *Occaſional* Conformity, related in Biſhop *Burnet's* and other Hiſtories; which, after three unſucceſsful efforts, was at length carried in the year 1711. The game was then in high-church hands, who played it ſo dextrouſly, as in the end to win the Schiſm-bill, and were within an ace of winning ſomething elſe of infinitely more conſequence.

But, providentially for the public, the reign of theſe politicians was now at an end. They were totally eclipſed by the acceſſion of *George* I, a pattern to good and righteous men, as well as to wiſe and upright ſovereigns. Such, however, was the remaining leaven of the former reign, that all that could be effected in favour of Chriſtian liberty, and even that after many ſtruggles and violent oppoſition, was the repeal of the two acts, that againſt *Occaſional Conformity*, and the other to *prevent the growth of ſchiſm*.

Attempts, indeed, were made to relieve the Proteſtant diſſenters from the hardſhips of the Teſt-act, both in this and the next reign, and perhaps ſomething more ought to have been ventured on thoſe occaſions, than the politicians of thoſe times were willing to put to the hazard. What we certainly know is, that theſe attempts did not miſcarry for want of the hearty concurrence of the princes upon the throne.

In

In the mean time, whatever the political reaſons might be for deſiſting from any farther moleſtation of the Teſt-act, it would have been ſtrange if, under the auſpicious patronage of a Sovereign of the illuſtrious houſe of *Brunſwick*, the ſons of liberty ſhould have been wanting to their cauſe, by ſitting down in profound ſilence. The righteouſneſs of Teſt-laws were now diſcuſſed in form, by the accurate Biſhop *Hoadley*, and the principles on which they were defended in a *religious* light, ſo effectually expoſed and diſgraced, that even the abilities of the inimitable *Sherlock* were found unequal to the taſk of ſupporting them.

In this ſtate things remained for ſome time. The eyes of the moſt prejudiced began to open, and to ſee the equity of relieving the proteſtant diſſenters from this ignominious diſtinction; and great hopes were conceived, that in no long time it would be removed; the rather, as even the conformiſts themſelves were *occaſionally* obliged to comply, not without ſome reluctance; *ſome* of them, I mean, who perhaps never had, nor would have given the church of *England* that particular aſſurance of their being in communion with her, if they had not been called upon by motives, in which their reſpect for her and her inſtitutions had no ſhare.

It may well be ſuppoſed, that this was a ſtroke which the high-church party could not bear with tolerable temper. But what was to be done? The

The argument was at an end, and perſonal attacks upon the adverſary were to little purpoſe, who was equally unexceptionable as a *writer* and as a *man*, and who was only vulnerable in point of his conformity to a church, whoſe forms of diſcipline and government he had ſhewn, upon Goſpel-principles, to be liable to ſo many important objections.

In this diſtreſsful hour of deſpondency, and when things, on the part of the *teſt-men*, were going on faſt towards a ſtate of deſperation, aroſe a champion for the church, who, *changing the old poſture of defence*, undertook to vindicate the teſt-law upon the hypotheſis of an *Alliance between Church and State*.

Two circumſtances, indeed, appeared upon the outſet of this undertaking, which bore an unpromiſing aſpect towards the learned author's ſucceſs.

The firſt was, that the queſtion concerning *religious liberty* had already paſſed thro' the hands of *Milton*, *Locke*, *Hoadley*, *Sherlock*, and other maſters of reaſoning of the firſt reputation, which could not but raiſe ſome little prejudice againſt an undertaker, who propoſed to ſtrike into a new road. The learned author, moreover, could prevail with himſelf to ſay, even after the labours of theſe great men, that he found the ſubject in an *embroiled condition* *. Which how-

* View of Lord *Bolingbroke's* Philoſophy, Lett. iv. p. 83.

ever

ever did not tend to abate the prejudice, more especially when it appeared that, in order to *disembroil* it, he availed himself of the aid of such writers as *De Marca* and *Bossuet*.

The other circumstance which incumbered his enterprize, was his proposing to support a TEST on such reasoning as would not destroy a TOLERATION *; by which it appeared that he meant such a TOLERATION *only* as presupposed the ESTABLISHMENT of a NATIONAL CHURCH, — a *toleration* consisting in an *indulgence* with respect to separate places of worship or different modes of discipline, or in allowances of partial and occasional conformity.

Whereas the *toleration* contended for by the advocates of religious freedom, was "*absolute* "*liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial* "*liberty* upon the principle that neither single "persons, nor churches, nay nor even common-"wealths, have any just title to invade the civil "rights and worldly goods of each other, upon "pretence of religion †." An attempt to make a *Test-law* consistent with this only true sense of *toleration*, may be considered in the same light as an attempt to make a thing *heavier than itself*, the want of which secret hath ruined many a hopeful trial at a *perpetual motion*.

* View of Lord *Bolingbroke's* Philosophy, Lett. iv. p. 83.

† See the Preface to the English translation of *Locke's* first letter concerning *Toleration*, and the letter itself, p. 42. of the last edition.

For

For the reſt, our learned author's principles are chiefly of the *political* kind, leading to expedients of *civil utility*. He was not, however, inſenſible, that, ſo far as the church was to contribute her *quota* to *this kind* of utility, ſhe muſt have the authority of the GOSPEL.

Biſhop *Hoadley*, from the circumſtance that our Saviour had declared *his kingdom not to be of this world*, had inferred, that "*Chriſt* is himſelf "the ſole *Lawgiver* to his *ſubjects*, and himſelf "the ſole *Judge* of their *behaviour*, in the affairs "of *conſcience* and *eternal ſalvation*; — that he "hath, in thoſe points, left behind him no vi-"ſible human *authority*; no *vicegerents*, who can "be ſaid properly to ſupply his place; no *inter-"preters*, upon whom his ſubjects are abſolutely "to depend; no *judges* over the conſciences or "religion of his people *."

Hence it followed, that no ſubjects of Chriſt's kingdom, under the name or notion of *the church*, could *convene*, as our author expreſſes it, with the civil magiſtrate, ſo, as to give up any points of *conſcience* to his direction; nor could the magiſtrate accept of ſuch overtures, or ſuch convention, without uſurping upon the province which Chriſt had reſerved to himſelf.

This was immediate death to the *theory* of *alliance*; nor would the Biſhop's interpretation of the text admit of any inference in favour of it.

* Sermon on *the Nature* of the *Kingdom* or *Church* of Chriſt.

Our

Our learned author, therefore, was under a neceſſity of finding *another* interpretation, which would better bear what he had to build upon this text. And here it follows.

"Our Saviour ſaith, *My kingdom is not of this* "*world*, which bears this plain and obvious ſenſe, "that the kingdom of Chriſt, to be extended "over all mankind, was not, like the kingdom "of God, confined to the Jewiſh people, where "religion was incorporated with the ſtate, and "therefore *of this world*, as well in the exerciſe "of it, as in the rewards and puniſhments by "which it was adminiſtred; but [the kingdom "of Chriſt] was *independent of all civil communities*, "and therefore neither *of this world* as to the "exerciſe of it, nor as to the rewards and puniſh-"ments by which it was adminiſtred *."

That a kingdom to be extended *over all mankind*, ſhould not be like a kingdom confined to *one particular people*, is indeed *plain* and *obvious* enough; but is equally *plain* and *obvious* with reſpect to the *Roman* as the *Jewiſh* kingdom: and why the former ſhould not be pitched upon as the inſtance put into compariſon with Chriſt's kingdom, eſpecially as the declaration was made to a *Roman* Governor, who might be apprehenſive of our Saviour's pretenſions to ſupplant *Tiberius*, is not quite ſo obvious. The difference too was the very ſame in the *Roman* as in the

* *Alliance*, p. 178.

Jewiſh

Jewiſh kingdom, both as to the exerciſe of it, and the rewards and puniſhments by which it was adminiſtred. Can any one ſuppoſe it to have been our Saviour's intent, on this occaſion, to give *Pilate* an idea of the *peculiarities* of the Jewiſh government?

Be that as it may; our learned author's interpretation will *even yet* bear Biſhop *Hoadley's* inferences. Whether it will bear any other, we may ſee as we go along.

"But, continues our author, whoever imagines that from this independency by inſtitution, the church cannot *convene* and *unite* with the ſtate, concludes much too faſt."

Here the *kingdom of Chriſt* is turned into THE CHURCH, which in this place muſt mean ſome particular *formed ſociety* of Chriſt's ſubjects, impowered *a priori* to act for themſelves and all the reſt, that is, for all mankind. But then, where is *this* church to be met with? A neceſſary queſtion, which ſhould have been anſwered before the learned author had ſtirred a ſtep farther. And now for the reaſoning by which this haſty concluſion is obviated.

"We have obſerved, ſaith the learned author, "that this property in the kingdom of Chriſt, "[*viz.* of being *not of this world*] was given as "a mark to diſtinguiſh it from the kingdom of "God. That is, it was given to ſhew, that this

"religion extended to all mankind, and was not, "like the *Moſaic*, confined to one only people."

And why not as a mark to diſtinguiſh it from *all the reſt* of the kingdoms *of this world*; a diſtinction as certainly intended in our Lord's declaration, as that mentioned by our learned author? The reaſon is plain. In that caſe, the kingdom of Chriſt could have *allied* with *none* of the kingdoms *of this world*, ſince the moment ſuch alliance ſhould take place, the *mark* would be *extinguiſhed* of courſe; and for this I appeal to the learned author's own interpretation of the text, who makes the property of the kingdom of Chriſt, of being *not of this world*, a conſequence of its being *independent of all civil communities*. But ſink this *independency* in an *union* or *alliance* with civil community, and the kingdom of Chriſt becomes, to all intents and purpoſes, a kingdom *of this world*, both as to the exerciſe of it, and as to the rewards and puniſhments by which it is adminiſtred.

This *mark* of *diſtinction*, therefore, was not to appear with reſpect to *any* kingdoms of this world, but the *Jewiſh* only; and with that there was no danger that the kingdom of Chriſt ſhould enter into *alliance*, as it was now upon the point of being broken up.

But the dexterity of our learned author appears to the greateſt advantage in the conſequence he draws from the foregoing poſitions.

"Con-

"CONSEQUENTLY, that very reaſon which "made it proper for the *Moſaic* religion to be "united by divine appointment to the ſtate, "made it fit the Chriſtian ſhould"——what? The caſt of the argument and the *mark of diſtinction* prepare you to expect——"ſhould *not* "be united to the ſtate." But, no: this would have *embroiled* the *theory* of *alliance* with a witneſs; and therefore happily and ſeaſonably does our learned author turn aſide, and conclude—— "made it fit that the Chriſtian [religion] ſhould "be left free and independent."

Agreed; *free* and *independent* of every legiſlator, judge, vicegerent, or interpreter, but Chriſt alone, TO THE END OF TIME.

No, here we part; for the learned author aſks, "But to what end, if not for this, to be at li- "berty to adapt itſelf to the many various civil "policies by a ſuitable *union* and *alliance*?"

And thus we ſee, not without ſome degree of ſurprize, that this very *independency* of the kingdom of Chriſt, which diſtinguiſhed it from all civil communities, as a kingdom *not of this world*, is made an inſtrument of turning it into as many kingdoms *of this world* as there are *civil policies* among the ſons of men.

But to the queſtion, "To what end, if not for "this?"——And is our learned author really in earneſt? Can he not perceive *one other* end for which the Chriſtian religion was left *free* and *independent*?

dependent? — An end proclaimed in every page of our Chriſtian oracles.——In one word, the great, the gracious, the generous end of communicating its bleſſings and benefits to every INDIVIDUAL OF THE HUMAN RACE, even though he ſhould be unconnected with, or excluded from, the privileges of every human eſtabliſhment on the face of the earth.

Let the learned author now try to make *his* end conſiſtent with *this*, to which the ſcriptures bear ſo ample and ſo often-repeated a teſtimony. We will be reaſonable. One ſingle paſſage of the New Teſtament, proving that "the Chriſtian re-"ligion was left free and independent, that it "might be at liberty to adapt itſelf to the many "various civil policies, by a ſuitable union and "alliance," will ſatisfy us. Nay, one ſingle paſſage from which it may be *clearly* inferred *.

* The learned author refers us, indeed, to a prophecy of *Iſaiah*, xlix. 22, 23. which he cites thus: *Thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the* GENTILES, *and ſet up my ſtandard to the people—and* KINGS SHALL BE THY NURSING FATHERS, AND THEIR QUEENS THY NURSING MOTHERS. This prophecy, he would have us believe, receives its *ultimate completion*, by the Chriſtian religion's "adapting "itſelf to the many various civil policies, by a ſuitable union "and alliance." Well then, let us ſee how this *completion* will turn out. If the Kings and Queens here mentioned repreſent the *ſtate*, the party to be *nurſed* by them repreſents the *church* in alliance with them. Now let us go on with the prophecy, for the learned author hath left it ſhort. *They* [the *Kings* and *Queens*, i. e. THE STATE] *ſhall bow down to thee* [THE

And

And thus much ſurely the learned author owes to his own argument; as many a plain, ſincere Chriſtian, even after all the pains taken with him in the book of *Alliance*, may, without ſuch additional evidence, be extremely at a loſs to conceive, what union or alliance between a kingdom which *is*, and a kingdom which *is not*, *of this world*, can with any propriety be called *ſuitable*.

Let us now attend to the upſhot. "An alli-
"ance then we muſt conclude the Chriſtian
"church was at liberty to make, notwithſtand-
"ing this *declared* nature of Chriſt's kingdom.
"So far is true indeed, that it is debarred from
"entering into any ſuch *alliance* with the ſtate,
"as may admit of any LEGISLATOR in Chriſt's
"kingdom but himſelf [that is, a power in the
"magiſtrate to alter doctrines]. But no ſuch

CHURCH] *with their face toward the earth, and lick up the duſt of thy feet.* If this is to be the *ultimate completion* of the prophecy, we have reaſon to be thankful that it hath not yet taken place, and that we have no intimation in the Chriſtian ſcriptures that it ever will, as the prophecy is here interpreted. The learned author hath all along taken it for granted, that church tyranny muſt be the conſequence of the church's being independent on the ſtate, and hath been at ſome pains to load the *proteſtant* aſſertors of this independency with this invidious *papiſtical* conſequence; being *willingly* ignorant, as it ſhould ſeem, that the independency contended for by the advocates for Chriſtian liberty, is not the independency of any *viſible ſociety*, but of *individuals* only. But, to take the matter at the very worſt, what will the ſtate gain by bringing the church into its dependency, if the *humiliation* above deſcribed is to be the effect of this laboured *alliance?*

"power is granted or uſurped by the ſupremacy "of the ſtate, [which extends only to diſci-"pline] *."

I muſt confeſs my ignorance. Till now I have thought *diſcipline* as proper an object of legiſlation as *doctrine*. And, unleſs Chriſt hath left no rules of diſcipline for the ſubjects of his kingdom, the civil magiſtrate and the church too are excluded from *altering* diſcipline by the ſame conſiderations which prohibit their *altering* doctrines. That Chriſt hath left rules or laws of diſcipline for his ſubjects, I think I may venture to aſſert on the teſtimony of the learned author himſelf, who, when the merits of this complex theory were not in agitation, could plainly ſee the ſuperior authority of the *Chriſtian* diſcipline in compariſon with that of the *alliance*.

The caſe was this: A certain Chancellor of a dioceſe, an officer appointed to execute the code

* See the *Alliance*, p. 180. and View of Lord *Bolingbroke's* Philoſophy, Lett. iv. p. 146.——There is not a word in the whole controverſy concerning *Church-authority* of a looſer and more equivocal ſignification than the word *diſcipline*. *Rites* and *Ceremonies* are reckoned by ſome writers among the articles of *diſcipline*. And yet *Rites* and *Ceremonies* may be *idolatrous*. *Teſts* and *ſubſcriptions* are conſidered by others, under the notion of *diſcipline*; and thus the magiſtrate, upon the principles of the Alliance, may have the power of *altering* doctrines. Biſhop *Hoadley's* ſtate of the caſe prevents this confuſion. Wherever conſcience is concerned, whether in matters of doctrine or diſcipline, there all lawgivers or judges, Chriſt alone excepted, are excluded.

of

of diſcipline by the powers in *alliance*, having unhappily incurred the learned author's diſpleaſure, is ſummoned by him before a FOREIGN JUDICATORY (a judicatory *foreign* to that wherein the ſaid Chancellor preſided), that is to ſay, HOLY SCRIPTURE. If this be really the caſe, what becomes of the ALLIANCE?

To this *foreign judicatory*, however, let us all appeal; and, when the *ſacramental teſt* can ſtand its ground before this tribunal, it will readily be given up as an object of REFORMATION.

It may now, perhaps, be expected that I ſhould give ſome account of a publication, which has in it ſo very little of the complexion of the times, and which appears at a ſeaſon, when there is but little proſpect of engaging the attention of the public to ſubjects of this nature and tendency.

The reader will perceive, that ſome part of theſe papers were written at times very diſtant from others, and not in the ſame order in which they now appear. Perſons and facts are mentioned or alluded to, which, when they were noticed, were ſtill upon the ſtage, but have now many of them diſappeared; nor has the author perhaps been ſufficiently careful to adjuſt his remarks upon them to the preſent period, ſo as to avoid the imputation of anachroniſms.

The *Free and Candid Diſquiſitions*, and afterwards the *Eſſay on Spirit*, gave occaſion to ſeveral

little pamphlets on the ſubject of a *review* of our public ſervice, and to the diſcuſſion of ſeveral particular points, which were ſuppoſed to be proper objects of it. And at the ſame time, when cards were not in the way, the ſame topics were debated in private parties.

Into one of theſe the author was accidentally thrown, where it was his hap to mention a glaring inconſiſtency in the caſe of ſubſcription to our eſtabliſhed *articles of religion*. Some gentlemen of good ſenſe and reſpectable ſtations, then preſent, expreſſed the utmoſt ſurprize on the occaſion; nor did a dignified divine, who alſo made one of the company, ſeem to have been apprized of the impropriety before it was then mentioned, tho', for the honour of the church, he made an attempt at a ſolution by that ſort of caſuiſtry, of which ſeveral ſamples may be met with in the enſuing diſcourſes.

One of the lay-gentlemen deſired to have the caſe ſtated upon paper, which, after ſome time, was preſented to him, and makes a part of the following work, though placed at ſome diſtance from the beginning. In going through the particulars then to be conſidered, the author found new matter ariſing upon him; which he purſued at leiſure hours, without thinking of putting any thing into form upon the ſubject immediately.

In

In thoſe days, the two principal ſees were filled with two prelates, well known, while they were in ſubordinate ſtations, for their zealous attachment to civil liberty, and for their enlarged, generous, and chriſtian ſentiment in religion; in which one of them perſiſted to the laſt moment of his life, and in the higheſt eminence of ſtation, and gave proof of it in a remarkable inſtance, which, when the time comes to give his character its full luſtre, will do him honour with our lateſt poſterity.

Here was then encouragement to venture ſomething for the truth, and on that fair occaſion, the author methodized and put the finiſhing hand to his collections. But a ſudden change in the face of affairs quickly convinced him, that a publication of ſuch ſentiments would be now quite out of ſeaſon.

It will certainly now be demanded, if out of ſeaſon *then*, what is it that hath brought to light a work of this ſort at a period, when there is not only ſo conſiderable a change in the public taſte, but when other circumſtances, unfavourable to the cauſe of reformation, ſeem to diſſuade an enterprize of this kind, for ſtill more cogent reaſons?

It may look like a paradox to allege (in anſwer to this expoſtulation) that there are others who

who can give a better account of this matter than the author himſelf; which however is pretty much the caſe. Suffice it to ſay on the part of the author, that his principal inducement to acquieſce in the publication was, his obſerving the redoubled efforts of popery to enlarge her borders, without being at the pains, as heretofore, to cover her march, and the ſurprizing indifference with which ſome public and even clamorous notices of her pogreſs were received, where, one would have thought, both intereſt and duty were concerned to remark and obſtruct her paſſage.

As this is a matter of ſome conſequence, I muſt beg a little more of the reader's patience for a few reflexions upon it.

Dr. *Moſheim* hath obſerved, that, "in theſe "latter days, this great and extenſive commu-"nity [*the reformed church*] comprehends in its "boſom, Arminians, Calviniſts, Supralapſarians, "Sublapſarians, and Univerſaliſts, who live to-"gether in charity and friendſhip, and unite "their efforts in healing the breach, and dimi-"niſhing the weight and importance of thoſe "controverſies, which ſeparate them from the "communion of the *Romiſh* church *."

* *Moſheim*, Comp. View, p. 574. Vol. II.

There

There ſeems to me to be a want of preciſion in this paſſage, as it ſtands in Mr. *Maclaine's* tranſlation; and how it is in the original, I have not an opportunity of being informed. Dr. *Moſheim* certainly means upon the whole, that the reformed churches have, in theſe latter days, ſhifted nearer to popery; and I cannot but think we may ſafely truſt his knowledge and his integrity for the matter of fact, however he may be miſtaken in accounting for it.

Mr. *Maclaine* indeed, in his note upon this paſſage, calls it, "a ſtrange and groundleſs aſperſion, and finds it difficult to conceive how "it ſhould eſcape the pen of this excellent hiſtorian. He thinks the reformed churches "were never at ſuch a diſtance from the ſpirit "and doctrine of the church of *Rome*, as at this "day; and that the progreſs and improvement "of ſcience and philoſophy ſeem to render a "relapſe into popiſh ſuperſtition morally impoſſible, in thoſe who have been once delivered "from its baneful influence."

I muſt freely own, I cannot ſee the force of this reaſoning. Has there been no progreſs, no improvement in ſcience and philoſophy, in popiſh countries? This cannot be ſaid. Are the improvements in theſe articles in ſome of thoſe countries *leſs* and *fewer* than in *any* reformed country?

country? Neither will this be affirmed. What intelligence, then, have we from thoſe popiſh countries where theſe improvements are the moſt conſpicuous, of a proportionable progreſs of religious reformation in them? Have we no reaſon to ſuſpect, that if an accurate account were to be taken, the balance in point of *converſions*, in the *moſt improved* of thoſe countries, would be greatly againſt the reformed religion?

On another hand, improvements in philoſophy, are ſaid to have made many ſceptics in religion, in all churches reformed and unreformed. And ſcepticiſm, when, in a melancholy or a departing hour, it is mixed, as is frequently the caſe, with a certain degree of apprehenſion of what may be *hereafter*, is very apt to take its repoſe in the boſom of that church, which offers the ſpeedieſt and moſt effectual ſecurity *every way*, without putting the perplexed patient to the trouble of examining and determining for himſelf. And of all the churches in Chriſtendom, that which offers this ſort of ſecurity with the greateſt confidence, is, out of all queſtion, the church of *Rome*.

But this is not all. There is *one* ſcience wherein the reformed churches, perhaps in moſt countries, have made as remarkable improvements,

as

as in any other. I mean the ſcience of POLITICS, which, as ſome think, has had no obſcure effects upon them all. And church politics, in reformed countries, chiefly aim at accommodating all the peculiarities in their reſpective ſyſtems, as much as may be, to the religon of the magiſtrate; a conduct, which, out of all doubt, cannot be defended in *every inſtance*, upon any principles which are of proteſtant original. It is the ſame ſort of *policy* which hath laid to ſleep ſo many controverſies among the reformed, which ſome perhaps may think a bleſſing. Controverſies, however, have had *this* good in them. They have kept the ſeveral parties among the reformed upon their guard not to incur the reproach of each other of advancing too near to the quarters of the common enemy. We are told, with ſome degree of exultation, that this contentious ſpirit is ſubſided. It is a good hearing, if it hath not ſunk along with it, the *ſimplicity*, *godly ſincerity*, and truly *apoſtolical zeal* of our firſt reformers againſt popery: otherwiſe we may have no great occaſion to rejoyce; and ſhould be ſent to learn what that meaneth, MY *peace I leave with you*, MY *peace I give unto you*; NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.

But not to lay too much ſtreſs upon circumſtances, ſuppoſitions, and inferences from mere appearances, let us attend to a remarkable fact, brought indeed on another occaſion by Dr. *Moſheim*, but which fully juſtifies his obſervation above cited, and, which is more, has the ſanction of Mr. *Maclaine* himſelf, and is the more intereſting to us, as it immediately relates to our own eſtabliſhed church.

"As to the ſpirit of the eſtabliſhed church of "*England*, ſays Dr. *Moſheim*, in relation to thoſe "who diſſent from its rule of doctrine and go"vernment, we ſee it no where better than in the "conduct of Dr. *Wake*, archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, "who formed a project of peace and union between "the *Engliſh* and *Gallican* churches, founded upon "this condition, that each of the two communi"ties ſhould retain the greateſt part of their re"ſpective and peculiar doctrines *."

What a door is here opened for reflexion! A Proteſtant Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, a pretended champion too of the proteſtant religion, ſets on foot a project for union with a popiſh church, and that with conceſſions in favour of the groſſeſt ſuperſtition and idolatry; and this repreſented as the *ſpirit* of the eſtabliſhed church of *England*,

* Comp. View, vol. II. p. 576.

in relation to thoſe who diſſent from its rule of doctrine and government!

'Tis true, there are *proteſtant* diſſenters from the rule of *government* of the eſtabliſhed church of *England*, who agree with her in her rule of doctrine; and Dr. *Moſheim's* inſtance being brought as an indication of the ſpirit of the church of *England* in general, it might be ſuppoſed this eſtabliſhed church would go as far to meet *theſe* diſſenters, as to meet the papiſts. — I wiſh this could be ſaid. But our hiſtory affords no inſtance of an archbiſhop of *Canterbury* negotiating with proteſtant diſſenters upon any ſuch condition as that mentioned by *Moſheim*: and ſuch of them as, ſince the Reformation, might have had an inclination that way, have been too wary to go ſo far as Dr. *Wake* is ſaid to have done with *Du Pin*. And if the conduct of the church of *England* is to be judged of by that of Archbiſhop *Wake*, the oppoſition of that prelate to the repeal of the Schiſm-bill ſhews, that an union with proteſtant diſſenters, upon the condition offered to the papiſts, is the laſt thing the eſtabliſhed church of *England* would think of.

But, happily for us, Dr. *Moſheim* was miſtaken in taking his meaſure of the *ſpirit* of the eſtabliſhed church of *England*, from the *ſpirit* of an archbiſhop of *Canterbury*. Biſhops are as apt to be intoxicated with power and pre-eminence as other

other mortals, and have too often been tempted to extend their domination beyond its *eſtabliſhed* bounds, when, if they had been called to account, the church eſtabliſhed (even upon principles of the *Alliance*) muſt have diſowned their authority, becauſe the law and the magiſtrate would. I am not ſufficiently informed of the circumſtances of this tranſaction of Archbiſhop *Wake*, to know what progreſs he had made in it. But I take it for granted, that, before he could bring it to bear, it muſt have paſſed through *other* hands; and I remember enough of the times when Dr. *Wake* figured at the head of the church, to be very certain that it would *then* have been loſt labour to ſollicit the conſent of a majority even of the members of the church of *England* to an union with the *Gallican* (that is, the *French* popiſh) church, even tho' all the biſhops upon the bench had recommended it.

Is our hiſtorian then to be condemned for his temerity in making ſuch a judgment of the church of *England*? By no means. A treaty of this kind, openly avowed, eſpouſed, and promoted by an Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, and with reſpect to which there was no *apparent* oppoſition, might appear to a foreigner a ſufficient indication of the ſpirit of the whole community, and

no

no improper inſtance of *one* reformed church, at leaſt, "uſing her efforts, in theſe latter days, to "diminiſh the weight and importance of thoſe "controverſies that ſeparate her from the com-"munion of the church of *Rome*."

But what ſhall we ſay to Mr. *Maclaine*, who, in a note upon this paſſage, not only acknowledges and confirms the fact by additional circumſtances, but ſeems to give it the ſanction of his approbation?

"The intereſts of the proteſtant religion," ſays he, "could not be in ſafer hands than Archbiſhop "*Wake's*. He, who had ſo ably and ſo ſucceſs-"fully defended proteſtantiſm as a controverſial "writer, could not ſurely form any project of "peace and union with a Roman-catholic church, "the terms of which would have reflected on his "character as a negociator."

Could Mr. *Maclaine* be ſerious when he wrote thus? Had he reflected upon the *condition* upon which that prelate founded his treaty, namely, that "*each of the two communities ſhould retain* THE "GREATEST PART OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AND "PECULIAR DOCTRINES?" And has he conſidered to what theſe amount, even in the *modified* popery of the *French*, or what would be the conſequences of our *uniting* with the *Gallican* church in theſe circumſtances?

Dr. *Wake's* merit, as a controverſial writer for the proteſtant religion, will be readily acknow-

ledged, nor is his conduct (friendly to reformation) at the trial of *Sacheverell* forgotten. But he was not THEN Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*. It is well known what alteration an *elevated* ſituation makes in the magnitude, arrangement, and effect of objects, in the ſame proſpect taken from an inferior poſition. This had its influence upon Dr. *Wake*, and it has had the ſame upon others. After all, this inſtance of a reformed church growing more placable towards *Romiſh* doctrines, is, on the behalf of Dr. *Moſheim*, an inſtance *ad hominem* to Mr. *Maclaine*, even with Mr. *Maclaine's* own ſuffrage, who will therefore, it is hoped, abate of his reſentment towards that excellent hiſtorian, and conſider his remark in a leſs invidious light than that of an *aſperſion*.

Mr. *Maclaine*, indeed, muſt be much better informed concerning the ſtate of religion *abroad*, than we in this iſland; and he aſſures us, in this preſent year, 1765, that "the reformed churches "were never at ſuch a diſtance from the ſpirit "and doctrine of the church of *Rome* as at this "day;" and if this is ſaid upon good grounds, we cannot but rejoice that our foreign proteſtant brethren are ſo ſtedfaſt and immoveable, and have leſs reaſon to be alarmed at the contrary appearances at home, where Mr. *Maclaine* will allow us to be competent judges in our turn.

It

It hath been lamented of late, that the zeal and vigilance both of paſtors and people in the church of *England*, againſt popery and popiſh emiſſaries, is viſibly declined. The papiſts, ſtrengthened and animated by an influx of *Jeſuits*, expelled even from popiſh countries for crimes and practices of the worſt complexion, open public Maſs-houſes, and affront the laws of this proteſtant kingdom in other reſpects, not without inſulting ſome of thoſe who endeavour to check their inſolence. It is not long ago, that we were told, with the utmoſt coolneſs and compoſure, in a pamphlet written expreſsly in defence of ſome proceedings in a certain epiſcopal ſociety, and, as is conjectured, by ſomebody in no ordinary ſtation, that "*Popiſh Biſhops* go "about here, and exerciſe every part of their "function WITHOUT OFFENCE, AND WITHOUT "OBSERVATION *." A circumſtance that can no otherwiſe be accounted for, than upon the ſuppoſition that the two hierarchies are growing daily more and more into a reſemblance of each other; which ſuppoſition is indeed neceſſary for the ſupport of the point, in proof of which this notable fact is employed. Surely theſe *phænomena* were not common, even in Archbiſhop *Wake's* time.

* Anſwer to Dr. *Mayhew's* Obſervations.

Our proteſtant diſſenters in general have, I hope and believe, very different conceptions of the malignity of popiſh principles, and of their fatal aſpect upon the civil and religious rights of *Great Britain*. I know ſome of the worthieſt and moſt judicious among them, who ſee with concern and anxiety the little interruption that is given to the unwearied endeavours of treacherous prieſts to pervert his Majeſty's proteſtant ſubjects to their intolerant ſuperſtition, and conſequently from their allegiance.—A late caſe, however, remarkable enough to have taken up no little room in the public prints, hath diſcovered, that *all* the leading characters among them are not of the ſame ſtamp, and that popery itſelf may be diveſted of its terrors in the eyes of a *once* zealous champion for religious liberty in its fulleſt extent, when taken into the protection of a man, who, for the time being, had the diſtribution of the loaves and the fiſhes.

But let us now proceed to inquire what popery hath done to entitle herſelf to this complaiſance from the reformed churches; what ſteps ſhe hath taken, or what diſpoſition ſhe hath ſhewn, to meet all or any of theſe churches half-way?

And here I will not aſk whether the papiſts have endeavoured to diminiſh the weight and importance of thoſe controverſies they have with us, which are merely of the *religious* kind. I will

will not inquire whether and how far the church of *Rome* hath modified her abſurd and impoſſible doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*. I will not examine her on the head of *purgatory*, *ſaint-worſhip*, *relics*, *maſſes for the dead*, *penances*, and other articles, which have no immediate ill effect upon civil ſociety. I will only inquire whether popery hath reduced her ancient pretenſions ſo far, as to become a friendly, benevolent, and charitable neighbour to perſons of the reformed religion.

In the firſt place, hath ſhe acquitted the proteſtants of *hereſy?* If not, is ſhe convinced that *heretics* ought to be tolerated, and that ſhe ought to keep her faith and perform her covenants with them, as well as with perſons of her own communion? Or hath ſhe receded from her claim to infallibility, on which theſe other doctrines are built?

Have the papiſts of *Great Britain*, in particular, given the King and his Government the ſecurity of their allegiance, as proteſtant ſubjects do? Do they acknowledge no King of *Great Britain* but his majeſty King GEORGE III? Have not a majority of Engliſh papiſts of rank and fortune *Jeſuits* in their houſes, as directors of their conſciences? Have not their youth been ſent to be educated among *Jeſuits*? Are not the Roman-catholic prieſts, ſtationed all over *Eng-*

land, chiefly of the *Jeſuitical* order? Is it not the doctrine of the *Jeſuits* that princes may be excommunicated by the Pope, and afterwards depoſed or murdered? Are not all Proteſtant princes, and particularly the King of *Great Britain*, conſidered by this order of men, as already excommunicated? Are not all perſons whoſe conſciences are directed by *Jeſuits* obliged to believe as the *Jeſuits* themſelves believe? And are not they who hold theſe opinions, ſworn enemies to the proteſtant government of theſe Kingdoms?

If theſe queſtions cannot be anſwered to the ſatisfaction of a proteſtant people, it behoveth every good ſubject to our gracious Sovereign, and every friend to this country, to keep up a ſpirit of vigilance and attention to every motion of theſe dangerous inmates, whom we daily ſee ſtrengthening their hands with new converts, of whom the leaders of this malignant party will not fail to avail themſelves, the moment they find their numbers ſufficient to give them an equal chance in a ſtruggle to wreſt out of our hands our ineſtimable rights and liberties civil and religious.

But you will aſk, "what has all this to do "with ſubſcription to *Articles of religion*, and "the

"the eſtabliſhment of *Confeſſions of faith* and "doctrine in proteſtant churches?"

Not ſo little as you may imagine. All religious impoſitions in proteſtant ſocieties, not warranted by ſcripture, and which muſt be ſubmitted to, on the pain of wanting bread, have a tendency to leſſen the apprehenſions, that they who have ſo much at ſtake as Britiſh ſubjects have, ought to entertain of the incroachments of Popery. Men of liberal education, finding they cannot be completely qualified for certain public ſtations, without complying with terms, of the rectitude of which they are not ſatisfied, and with which they muſt comply, or loſe the expence as well as the fruits of their education, will naturally be loath to forego the means of their ſubſiſtence for a ſcruple which is not countenanced by one example in a thouſand, and will therefore comply at all events. They will be apt to ſuſpect, that a free examination into the merits of the caſe might leave impreſſions, which would either diſappoint their proſpects in life, or, in caſe of compliance, bring upon them anxieties that would embitter every emolument ariſing from their profeſſion. What wonder that, in theſe circumſtances, they ſhould take up with the firſt flimſy caſuiſtry ſuggeſted to them by a fellow-feeling brother? or, which is the

ſhorter cut, and by far the moſt current anodyne, repoſe themſelves in the authority of the church?

In either caſe, they are in a train which would lead them with equal ſecurity to acquieſce in the genuine impoſitions of popery. The caſes only differ in the degrees of *more* and *leſs*: and they of courſe muſt be tender in aſſerting the privileges of *chriſtian liberty*, on the peril of being mortified with recriminations, which the reproof of their own hearts would force them to apply, not without painful ſenſations. Nor is there any alternative, but a ſtate of profligate ſecularity, diſpoſing men to ſeek affluence, power, and dignity at any rate, and by any means that will give them the ſpeedieſt poſſeſſion; and with ſuch men, popery and proteſtantiſm, the evangeliſts and the maſs-book, are upon a level.

This is the way that ſome people have of accounting for the omiſſion of the MASTER ARGUMENT againſt popery, in thoſe few and ſuperficial diſcourſes on the ſubject, which are now-a-days heard from the pulpit.

It can never be for the intereſt of a free ſtate to have men under this kind of diſtreſs in any public office; much leſs thoſe who are callous, and perfectly proof againſt ſuch feelings. It may be

for

for the intereſt of a church to have a hank of this kind upon the clergy; but it muſt be the intereſt of a church, with which it is not for the intereſt of a free protèſtant ſtate to cultivate an *alliance*.

It is not uſual for Authors to apologize for their Title-pages. But I am told, that the word *Confeſſional* is quaint and uncouth, liable to a perverſe interpretation. I wiſh thoſe Critics may find nothing more exceptionable in their Review of the work itſelf, and then I may hope to abide their cenſures with tolerable patience. Perhaps, when the candid Reader obſerves what kind of *Confeſſions* from the Defenders of Subſcription are exhibited in the courſe of this work, he will not be diſguſted with an alluſion to a ſort of Penitential Exerciſe, which another kind of votaries would probably undergo with extreme reluctance, were it not for their extraordinary veneration for the injunctions of the church.

THE

THE CONFESSIONAL.

CHAP. I.

A ſummary View of the Riſe, Progreſs, and Succeſs of eſtabliſhed Confeſſions of Faith and Doctrine in Proteſtant Churches.

WHEN the Proteſtants firſt withdrew from the communion of the Church of *Rome*, the principles they went upon were ſuch as theſe:

"JESUS CHRIST hath by his goſpel "called all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty "of the ſons of God, and reſtored them to the "privilege of working out their own ſalvation "by their own underſtandings and endeavours. "For this work of ſalvation ſufficient means are "afforded in the holy ſcriptures, without having "recourſe to the doctrines and commandments "of men. In theſe ſcriptures all things needful "for ſpiritual living and man's ſoul's health are "mentioned and ſhewed. Conſequently, faith

"and conſcience, having no dependence upon "man's laws, are not to be compelled by man's "authority; and none other hath the Church of "*Rome* to ſhew for the ſpiritual dominion ſhe "claimeth. The church of Chriſt is congre-"gated by the word of God, and not by man's "law; nor are the King's laws any farther to be "obeyed, than they agree with the law of God."

Private Chriſtians being thus left at liberty, by the original principles of the Reformation, to ſearch the ſcriptures for the grounds of their religion, and to build their faith on this foundation *only*, a very moderate ſhare of ſagacity would enable the leading Reformers to foreſee, that diverſity of opinions concerning many points of doctrine would be unavoidable; and that from hence frequent occaſions of offence would ariſe among themſelves, not without ſome advantage to the common adverſary.

Whether they might not, in a good meaſure, have prevented any very ill conſequences of this liberty without departing from the ſimplicity of the Scripture-plan; that is to ſay, whether they might not have kept the terms of communion ſufficiently open for pious and reaſonable Chriſtians of very different opinions to have complied with them, without abridging their Chriſtian liberty, or doing violence to their conſciences, cannot now be determined. Certain it is that ſuch an experiment was never tried, nor perhaps ever thought of, till the diſtemper was gone too far to be cured.

Inſtead

Inſtead of making this experiment, the Reformers, having unhappily adopted certain maxims as ſelf-evident, namely, that "there could be no edification in religious ſociety without uniformity "of opinion,"—that "the true ſenſe of ſcripture "could be but *one*," * and the like, preſently fell upon the expedient of *preventing* diverſity of opinions, by contracting their original plan in agreement with theſe maxims. The *one* ſenſe of ſcripture was determined to be the ſenſe of the primitive church, that is to ſay, the ſenſe of the orthodox fathers for a certain number of centuries. From theſe they took their interpretations of ſcripture, and upon theſe they formed their rule of faith and doctrine, and ſo reduced their reſpective churches within the bounds of a theological ſyſtem. The conſequence of which was, that every opinion deviating from this ſyſtem, whatever countenance or ſupport it might have from a different ſenſe of ſcripture, became a declared hereſy.

Hence it came to paſs that many Proteſtants of very different characters and tempers, finding theſe incroachments on their Chriſtian liberty, and themſelves not only excluded from communion with their brethren, but ſtigmatized with an invidious name, were provoked to ſeparate from their leaders, and to ſet up for themſelves; which many of them did on grounds ſufficiently

* See *Moſheim's* Compend. View of Eccleſ. Hiſt. vol. II. p. 159. and *Maclaine's* note [*a*].

juſtifiable; whilſt others, whoſe pride, paſſion, and ſelf-conceit knew no bounds, and whom probably the moſt reaſonable terms of communion would not have reſtrained, under the pretence of aſſerting their liberty againſt theſe dogmatical chiefs, formed themſelves into ſects, which afterwards made the moſt infamous uſe of it.

That ſome of theſe ſects were ſcandals to all religion, and nuiſances to all civil ſociety, was but too viſible. That they were the offspring of the reformation, was not to be denied. The doctrines which afterwards diſtinguiſhed the ſober and ſerious Proteſtant churches, were not yet made public, nor perhaps perfectly ſettled. They were yet only to be found in the writings of ſome private doctor, whom his brethren were at liberty to diſown, or in catechiſms for youth, or directories for miniſters within their ſeveral departments. — A concurrence of unhappy circumſtances, which afforded the Papiſts a moſt favourable opportunity of calumniating the whole Proteſtant body as the maintainers of every hereſy, and the abettors of every ſedition, which *Europe* had heard of or ſeen in that generation.

It was to no purpoſe that theſe hot-headed irregulars were diſowned, and their doctrines reprobated, by ſome of thoſe eminent doctors on whom the credit and ſucceſs of the Reformation ſeemed chiefly to depend. Theſe might ſpeak their own ſenſe; but it did not appear by what

authority they undertook to anſwer for the whole body. The nature of the caſe called for ſuch apologies as theſe, that their defection from *Rome* might not fall under a general odium; and it might ſtill be true that all Proteſtants thought in their hearts, what theſe indiſcreet ſectaries ſpoke out. A ſuſpicion which was not a little confirmed by the leading principle of the moſt outrageous Anabaptiſts, which was expreſſed in the very words of *Luther* himſelf [*A*].

Theſe circumſtances laid the Proteſtants under a neceſſity of publiſhing to the whole world explicit confeſſions of their faith and doctrine, authenticated by formal atteſtations of the leading members of their reſpective churches. That of the Proteſtant Princes of *Germany* led the way; being ſolemnly tendered to the Emperor *Charles* V. in the diet held at *Ausburgh* in the year 1530. This precedent other Proteſtant ſtates and churches thought fit to follow on different occaſions; and by this means acquitted themſelves, at leaſt among all equitable judges, of the ſcandal of abetting the ſchiſmatical and ſeditious enthuſiaſts, who about that time infeſted different countries under the pretence of promoting reformation.

Theſe confeſſions, being laid before the public with this formality, very ſoon became of more importance than juſt to ſerve a preſent turn.

[*A*] Viz. *A Chriſtian man is maſter of every thing.* See *Bayle's* Dictionary, art. *Anabaptiſts*, rem. [*A*].

They were ſolemnly ſubſcribed by the leading men of the ſeveral communions on whoſe behalf they were exhibited, as doctrines by which they would live and die; and were conſequently to be defended at all events. And therefore, to ſecure the reputation of their uniformity to all ſucceeding times, an unfeigned aſſent to the public confeſſion, confirmed either by ſubſcription or a ſolemn oath, became, in moſt of the Proteſtant churches, an indiſpenſable condition of qualifying their paſtors for the miniſtry, and in ſome of admitting their lay-members to church-communion.

But this expedient, intended to prevent diviſion in particular ſocieties, unhappily proved the means of imbroiling different churches one with another, to a very unedifying degree. Some of theſe confeſſions, in their zeal to ſtigmatize the hereſies of the moſt obnoxious ſectaries, had made uſe of terms which no leſs reprobated the doctrines of their orthodox brethren: the immediate conſequence of which was, that ſeveral controverſies which had ariſen among the reſpective leaders of the Reformation at the beginning, and had been partly compoſed, and partly ſuſpended, in regard to their common intereſt, were now revived, not without much heat and bitterneſs.

On this incident, the Papiſts changed their method of attack, and readily took this occaſion not only to inſult the Reformed on their want of unity, but to turn many doctrines to their own account,

account, which particular men had advanced in conformity to their own confeſſions [*B*].

Againſt theſe objections the Proteſtants had a variety of defences, ſome of which, it muſt be owned, had more ſtrength as they were applied

[*B*] "The *Lutherans* and *Calviniſts*," ſays a very competent judge, "by cheriſhing ſome errors of their reſpective princi-"pals, were altogether hindered from rightly anſwering the "*Papiſts*." See *Phœnix*. vol. II. p. 315. At length aroſe the immortal *Chillingworth*, who diſclaimed the defence of the Proteſtant religion, as it lay in ſyſtems and confeſſions, and appealed to the *Bible* only. By this means many cavils were cut off at once, and many confeſſions of ſyſtematical doctors rendered of no uſe to the Papiſts at all; who, being well aware of the advantages the popiſh cauſe would loſe by this expedient, were accordingly extremely provoked at it. They called it a *novelty* which the Proteſtants in general would not approve. And it appeared, in the event, that they were not *totally* miſtaken. For the application of this rule by a liberal-ſpirited Engliſh Prelate on a certain occaſion, put another Engliſh Prelate [Biſhop *Hare*] extremely out of humour: a Prelate who, when the force of *epiſcopal* prejudice was out of the way, had ridiculed ſyſtematical attachments in a much admired irony, which however owed all its beauty and all its force to this very principle of *Chillingworth*. Mr. *Deſmaizeaux* (*Chillingworth's* biographer) thought it neceſſary to exculpate *Chillingworth* from this popiſh charge of *novelty*, and, as it ſeems to me, has ſucceeded very ill. He ſays, "All Proteſtants had declared "in their confeſſions, or articles of religion, that the ſcriptures "are the only rule of faith by which thoſe confeſſions them-"ſelves are to be tried." But the queſtion was not, what *all* Proteſtants had *declared*, but whether *any* Proteſtant church had *acted* conformably to that declaration, and ventured to defend the proteſtant religion on ſcripture-principles, even at the expence (if ſo it ſhould fall out) of its own eſtabliſhed confeſſion? His anſwer to Biſhop *Hare's* peeviſhneſs is much better. *Life of Mr. Chillingworth*, p. 169, and 198.

to the Papists, than merit in themselves. They said, that "a want of unity was no greater re-"proach to them from the Papists, than it was "to the primitive church from the Jews and "Heathens, and that the same apologies would "serve in both cases." They might have added, that divisions in the Christian church had been for the most part occasioned and fomented by the peremptory decisions and intolerant spirit of those particular doctors, who happened to have the lead for the time being. But this, being too much the case of the Protestants themselves, was not to be insisted on. Some advantage indeed they had in the way of recrimination: but here the Papists found the means to parry the blow; alledging (what indeed was very true) that the most considerable of the points in dispute among them had never been decided *e cathedra*, and so were left open to amicable debate without breach of unity; whereas the doctrines controverted among Protestants were solemnly established in their several confessions, and the confessions themselves ratified by oaths, subscriptions, &c. and the belief of them thereby made an indispensable condition of communion [*C*].

[*C*] Thus, with respect to the famous five points concerning which the synod of *Dort* was so untractable, the disputes in the church of *Rome* were bitter enough; but then, "the council "of *Trent* had drawn up her decrees, on these heads, with a "*neutrality*," which pleased all, and disobliged none." *Heylin's* Quinquarticular Hist. p. 26. *Grotius* made use of this circumstance in pleading with the magistrates of *Amsterdam* for a toleration of the Remonstrants. "The doctrines disputed in

After

After much mortifying litigation concerning this want of unity among Proteſtants, it ſo happened that the *Belgic* and *Gallican* churches, in the name of themſelves and their orthodox ſiſter-churches, thought fit to deny the fact; and, in the year 1581, exhibited what they called *An Harmony of the Confeſſions* of no leſs than eleven Proteſtant churches, which they intended as an ample teſtimony of the unanimity of Proteſtants in their principal doctrines, and a full and ſatisfactory confutation of the Popiſh calumnies on this head.

This work, however, was not equally approved of by all the churches whoſe confeſſions it harmonized. It was even affronted by the church of *England* [*D*]: For, being tranſlated into *Engliſh* in the year 1586, Archbiſhop *Whitgift* (who at that time had the controul of the preſs) would not allow it to be printed in *London*, and imployed his authority likewiſe to have it ſuppreſſed in other places [*E*].

" *Holland*," ſaid he, " have not been decided by the church " of *Rome*, though ſhe is extremely fond of deciſions." *Abridgment of* Brandt's *Hiſtory of the Reformation, &c. by* La Roche, p. 344.

[*D*] The Engliſh confeſſion, exhibited in this *Harmony*, conſiſted of extracts from Biſhop *Jewel's* Apology; a book, in thoſe days, of equal authority with our Thirty-nine Articles. *Strype's Annals*, vol. I. chap. xxv — xxvii. and *Life of* Parker, p. 179.

[*E*] The *Harmony* was, however, printed at Cambridge that year, notwithſtanding *Whitgift's* expreſs prohibition. *Strype*, u. ſ. vol. III. b. ii. ch. 8. —— Mr. *Strype* has not informed us why the Archbiſhop diſallowed the *Harmony*: but the Bel-

There

There were indeed ſome conſiderations naturally ſuggeſted by the manner in which this work was executed, that would greatly obſtruct the good effects expected from it, whether with reſpect to compoſing differences among Proteſtants, or obviating the reproaches of the common adverſary.

1. In the firſt place, the compilers made no mention of the confeſſions or doctrines of any Proteſtants, who diſſented from the public forms, in thoſe countries where the reformed religion had gained an eſtabliſhment. They were indeed hardly charitable to ſuch diſſenters; cenſuring with particular ſeverity the authors of the book of *Concord*, which had appeared about this time [*F*].

gic and Gallican churches having expreſſed notions of church-government, ceremonies, &c. in ſome ſhort obſervations at the end of the book, not very favourable to *Whitgift's* principles, his Grace's diſtaſte for the work is not wholly unaccountable.

[*F*] And indeed not without reaſon, if theſe cenſures could have been paſſed conſiſtently with their deſign of exemplifying the *Harmony* ſubſiſting among Proteſtants. By this book of *Concord* (the work of ſome rigid Lutherans) all thoſe churches were excluded from Chriſtian communion, who would not ſubſcribe it. For which ſchiſmatical preſumption, the reformed divines of the Low-Countries expoſtulated ſharply with theſe authors, alleging the ſcandal and miſchief of ſuch peremptory deciſions, ſeeing that the Lutherans and Calviniſts differed only about two articles, the Lord's ſupper, and the two natures of Chriſt. *Blondel* indeed obſerves, "that they differed about two articles more, *viz.* "predeſtination and grace; yet, be-"lieving theſe to be of *no importance*, they [the Low-Country "divines] made no mention of them." *La Roche*, u. ſ. p. 197. Would theſe divines have believed a prophet who ſhould have

2. All the world knew very well, that not one of theſe eleven churches would allow any man to miniſter in it, and hardly perhaps to communicate with it, who ſhould refuſe to ſubſcribe the confeſſion of that church, even though he ſhould offer to ſubſcribe or ſwear to every other ſyſtem in the collection.

3. The *ſhort obſervations* at the end of the Harmony, the deſign of which appears to have been to accommodate the *aukward* expreſſions in ſome of theſe confeſſions to the orthodox ſenſe of the *Belgic* and *Gallican* churches (a liberty which the Harmonizers ſeem to have taken without any ſort of commiſſion) plainly ſhew, that ſome of theſe churches were at too great a diſtance from each other, to be reconciled by any ſuch equivocal expedients.

If the reader would know what was the reputation of theſe public confeſſions in other reſpects, he may be referred to a Lamentation which appeared about thirty years after the publication of this *Harmony*; ſetting forth, "That theſe "confeſſions were read by few: that they were

foretold, that their ſucceſſors, in the ſpace of forty years, would certainly treat all who differed from them in theſe two articles of *no importance*, juſt as the authors of the *Concord* had treated themſelves for differing with them on the other two? Mr. *La Roche* has given a pretty long extract of this Remonſtrance of the Low-Country divines, and ſays, *he inſerts it with pleaſure, becauſe it is very glorious to thoſe divines.* But to have perfectly atchieved this glory for them, he ſhould have ſuppreſſed his account of their perſecuting *Hubert Duifhuis*, becauſe he and his party refuſed to ſubſcribe *their* book of *Concord*. See p. 194. 203. 207.

"hardly

"hardly to be found in bookſellers ſhops; that "men rather choſe to provide themſelves with "the writings of private doctors, and to deter- "mine religious matters by any other teſtimo- "nies, rather than theſe public forms."

This complaint is taken from the Preface to the *Corpus Confeſſionum*, printed at *Geneva*, 1612; the deſign of which work was to revive the credit of theſe eſtabliſhed formularies, and to recommend them as "authentic tables and ſtan- "dards of the old and primitive faith." For this purpoſe the confeſſions of ſixteen different churches are here exhibited (not in detached and ſelected portions, as in the *Harmony*, but) *whole* and *entire*, as they were publiſhed and acknowledged by the churches to which they reſpectively belonged [*G*].

But, though the profeſſed deſign of this *Body of Confeſſions* was to accommodate divines and ſtudents in theology with a commodious and comprehenſive view of the whole doctrine of the reformed churches, yet was not the expedient of *harmonizing* their ſeveral confeſſions quite over-

[*G*] This, however, the famous *Peter Heylin*, diſputing for his doctor's degree at *Oxford* 1633, denied to be true; alleging on the part of the church of *England*, that the firſt clauſe of her xxth article, concerning *Church Authority*, was, in this collection, feloniouſly ſecreted; appealing to another edition of the Articles, which was on that occaſion fetched from a neighbouring bookſeller's, and in which the aforeſaid clauſe ſtood fair and legible. *Vernon's* Life of *Heylin*, p. 58—61.———See the editors of the *Corpus Confeſſionum* well vindicated, in an *An Hiſtorical and Critical Eſſay on the Thirty-nine Articles*, &c. printed for *Francklin*, 1724, Introduction, p. 22.

looked. But finding, 'tis likely, that the method taken in the old *Harmony* was justly exceptionable, these Editors contented themselves with referring their readers to a kind of *Synopsis*, where the agreement or harmony of particular churches on different articles is exhibited, without attempting to reconcile them on those articles, concerning which they did not appear to be unanimous.

In this *Synopsis* two things are more especially remarkable.

1. On the article of *Justification* and *Faith*, which is the 5th in this *Index*, the editors observe, that "All the confessions of the [Protestant] "churches teach this primary article of the Chri-"stian religion with a most holy consent [*H*]." Does not this note (with which this article alone is honoured) seem to imply a consciousness in the editors, that this was the single article in which *all* these confessions *did* agree?

[*H*] This fact, however, has been lately denied by a vehement advocate for confessions and subscriptions. "The doctrine "of justification," says he, "is explained with much greater "nicety in the *French* Confession (Article 18th) than it is in ours "(Art. 11th); and with such nicety, as occasioned a long dispute "between the *French* and some *German* divines, of whom "*Piscator* was one." *Church of* England *vindicated in requiring Subscription*, &c. p. 52. But in truth these disputes were of much longer standing. "*Osiander*, in his Confutation "of the book which *Melancthon* wrote against him, observes, "that there are twenty several opinions concerning *Justifica-*"*tion*, all drawn from the scriptures, by the men only of the "*Augustin* Confession." Bp. *Taylor*, Lib. Proph. p. 80.

2. Ac-

2. According to this Synopſis, there is a dead ſilence in many (ſometimes in the majority) of theſe confeſſions, concerning ſome of the fundamental articles of the Chriſtian religion. Thus only ſix of them are referred to as ſpeaking of *the providence of God*, in which number (I am loath to obſerve it) the Engliſh confeſſion is not reckoned for one; though both *Jewel's* Apology and the thirty-nine Articles are inſerted in this collection.*

Again, *eleven* of theſe *ſixteen* confeſſions take no notice of *the Reſurrection of the Dead*. I mention theſe omiſſions for the ſake of thoſe gentlemen, who would have it believed, that churches cannot be ſure of the orthodoxy of their miniſters in the moſt important points of the Chriſtian religion, without obliging them to ſubſcribe to their eſtabliſhed confeſſions [*I*]. How many excellent miniſters have there been in different Proteſtant churches, who never gave thoſe churches any ſecurity by way of ſubſcription, that they believed either *a reſurrection of the dead*, or *the providence of God*?

* So that a certain right reverend prelate, when he ſaid "that the political ſyſtem has *nothing* but the *Providence of* "*Government* to ſuſtain it againſt its own madneſs, from fall-"ing into anarchy," did not contradict any *article* or *confeſſion* of the church of *England*. Whether he contradicted any thing elſe, is another queſtion. See the Biſhop of *Glouceſter's* Sermon before the *Houſe of Lords*, Jan. 30, 1760. *Editor's Remark.*

[*I*] See Dr. *Stebbing's* Rational Enquiry into the proper Methods of ſupporting Chriſtianity.

It

It is not at all neceſſary to carry this diſquiſition any farther. How particular churches in ſubſequent times have been imbroiled on account of their eſtabliſhed confeſſions, is well known. In ſome of theſe churches the inconveniences of inſiſting on theſe teſts of orthodoxy have been ſo great, that they have found it the wiſeſt way either intirely to drop them, or to content themſelves with ſome general declaration, or promiſe from the miniſter, that he will not openly oppoſe them. In ſome churches a formal ſubſcription is ſtill required, even where the inconveniences of it have been no leſs, and where the moſt ſerious, conſcientious, and uſeful miniſters, are ſtill groaning under the burden of ſuch ſubſcriptions. It is chiefly for the ſake of ſuch as theſe, that this diſquiſition is undertaken, if by any means our preſent governors (who, if they had had the original work of reformation in their hands, together with the light and experience which the preſent and paſt ages have afforded, would, it may be preſumed, not have impoſed it) may be prevailed with to remove *a yoke, which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear* [K].

But to proceed. Upon this ſhort view of the tendency and effects of eſtabliſhed confeſſions in Proteſtant churches, the following reflexions ſeem to be very natural.

1. It was a great misfortune to the Proteſtants, that their confeſſions ſhould abound with explications of ſo many minute points of ſcholaſtic

[K] This was written in the year 1755.

theology,

theology, which, without ſtopping one popiſh mouth, with reſpect to the general accuſation of *Hereſy*, tended ſo manifeſtly to narrow their original foundation, and to give their common adverſaries ſo great an advantage, by rendering their breaches among themſelves, occaſioned by theſe explications, utterly irreconcileable.

2. It was a greater misfortune ſtill, that they ſhould think of eſtabliſhing theſe explications as teſts of orthodoxy, by requiring their miniſters to ſwear to them, or ſubſcribe them, as an indiſpenſable condition of admitting them to the paſtoral office. Had they been contented with a ſolemn declaration on the part of teachers and paſtors, "that they received the ſcriptures as the "word of God, and would inſtruct the people "out of thoſe *only*," leaving them at liberty to diſown whatever, after proper examination, they judged inconſiſtent with them; in all human probability the intereſts of popery would have declined more viſibly, and the true ends of reformation have been more ſpeedily, as well as more effectually, promoted.

But, after all, they who are extremely out of temper with the firſt Reformers, for their miſtaken and unſeaſonable zeal in thus preſcribing religious opinions to their fellow-chriſtians, without ſufficient warrant of ſcripture, would do well to conſider in what ſituation they were.

Many abuſes in popery lay open to the obſervation of men of *all* ſorts. But it could hardly be credited of a ſudden, by men of *any* ſort, that the

the greateſt part of that aſtoniſhing ſtructure called THE CHURCH, which pretended to have for its foundation the *Apoſtles* and *Prophets*, and *Chriſt* himſelf for its corner ſtone, ſhould be a mere heap of antichriſtian rubbiſh. It is, therefore, no wonder the moſt enlightened of our firſt Proteſtant Fathers ſhould be afraid of demoliſhing too much. It was viſible, with what props and ſupports the moſt eminent ſaints and doctors of former ages had accommodated the edifice. And theſe, it might well be imagined, would hardly have been placed there by ſuch venerable hands, without ſome good reaſon, and apparent neceſſity. In thoſe days, nothing was thought to be ſufficiently confirmed by ſcripture-teſtimonies, without additional vouchers from the ancient worthies of the church: and accordingly *Tertullian*, *Chryſoſtom*, *Auſtin*, and *Jerome*, regularly took their places on the ſame bench of judgment with *Paul*, *Peter*, *James*, and *John* [K].

In proceſs of time ſome particular perſons began to ſee into this miſtake. In our own country the learned *Cartwright*, in his diſpute with Archbiſhop *Whitgift*, about the year 1573, took the courage to appeal from the authority of the Fathers, and to preſcribe them narrower limits in the province of determining religious controverſies. How this would be received in thoſe days, might eaſily be conjectured without parti-

[K] See the *Catholicus Veterum Conſenſus*, at the end of the *Corpus Confeſſionum*.

cular information. The terms in which *Cartwright* had characterized theſe venerable doctors, were collected together in a book of *Bancroft's*, and ſet off with tragical exclamations, as if they had been little leſs than ſo much blaſphemy [*L*].

Some few years after this, *Eraſmus Johannes*, a ſchoolmaſter at *Antwerp*, took ſtill greater liberties with antiquity. "He affirmed that all the "councils which had met, and all the books of "the Fathers which had been written ſince the "death of the Apoſtles, were infected with anti-"chriſtian errors, not excepting the famous "Council of *Nice*." He propoſed therefore, that, in order to a perfect reformation, the new phraſes, and new ways of ſpeaking, invented by the Fathers, ſhould be wholly ſuppreſſed and laid aſide, and all religious propoſitions expreſſed, according to the ſimplicity of Chriſt and his Apoſtles. "If any man," ſays he, "finds him-"ſelf obliged to uſe new terms to expreſs the "articles of his faith, ſo that the words of the "Prophets and Apoſtles are not ſufficient for "him, that man's doctrines and religion are cer-"tainly new, as well as his terms; for otherwiſe "he would eaſily find, in the ſcripture, language "proper enough to expreſs his notions [*M*]." But the times were not yet ripe for the toleration of theſe ſentiments; and the poor man, who was hardy enough to venture them with the public, was obliged to fly his country.

[*L*] *Strype's* Life of *Whitgift*, p. 51.

[*M*] *La Roche*, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 218.

From theſe days, the authority of the Fathers hath continued gradually to decline among all reaſonable and conſiſtent Proteſtants, and more particularly ſince the publication of Mr. *Daille's* famous book, *De Uſu Patrum*, in 1631. But none, that I know of, ventured ſo far as the ſchoolmaſter of *Antwerp*, till about thirty years ago, an eminent prelate of our own church, ſtill living *, advanced pretty much the ſame doctrine, concerning the explication of points of faith, by new and unſcriptural phraſes; for which his Lordſhip underwent the diſcipline of ſeveral orthodox pens [*N*]; but without any loſs of reputation among thoſe who conſidered things with leſs prejudice. For, when it was ſeen that his Lordſhip had reduced his antagoniſts to the diſagreeable neceſſity of holding, that "*new* and "*unſcriptural* words would better fix the ſenſe of "ſcripture-doctrine, than the words of Chriſt "and his Apoſtles," the clamour ſubſided. Reaſonable men began to ſee the inconvenience of adopting a principle, which would go near to juſtify the worſt impoſitions of popery; and the practice of requiring ſubſcription to human explications of Chriſtian doctrine, is now conſidered and treated, by many different ſorts of ſenſible writers, as an unwarrantable incroachment on Chriſtian liberty; from which, there is reaſon to believe, all who are capable and willing to examine the ſubject *without partiality and without hypocriſy*, heartily deſire an happy deliverance.

* September 1, 1755. He died April 17, 1761.

[*N*] See Dr. *Stebbing's* Rational Enqniry, p. 25.

Upon this ſtate of the caſe, it appears, that the matter of complaint does not affect the *Fathers* of our Reformation by far ſo much as their *Sons* and *Succeſſors*. Our firſt Reformers were beſet with their own and other men's prejudices, to a degree that rendered them, in a great meaſure, incapable of conviction. It was next to impoſſible to convince them, that their eſtabliſhed confeſſions of faith were unchriſtian impoſitions, for which there was no juſt authority, when they had the early practice of the Chriſtian church to appeal to, long before the tyrannical ſpirit of Rome prevailed. Their veneration for antiquity prevented their ſeeing that theſe very precedents were ſome of the ſteps by which the papal power aſcended to its height, and arrived at the plenitude of its uſurpation.

But, ſince it has been made appear, that ſome of the Fathers who lived neareſt to the times of the Apoſtles, were greatly miſtaken in the ſenſe they put upon ſome ſcriptures, with reſpect to points of no ſmall importance, we have reaſon to hope, that our ſuperiors will no longer bind either themſelves or us to an implicit acquieſcence in an authority, which may occaſionally be extremely inconſiſtent with our original obligations as Chriſtians, as well as with the diſtinguiſhing principles of our profeſſion as Proteſtants. Whatever expedients of peace and order their own ſort of prudence, or the exigencies of the times they lived in, might ſuggeſt to theſe venerable Fathers, they certainly had no right to preſcribe articles of faith to *us*. And ſhould either they themſelves,

themſelves, or any others in their name, pretend to it, we beg leave to remind them of a capital maxim, to the truth of which the Fathers themſelves have occaſionally born their teſtimony, namely, *The ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament contain all things neceſſary to ſalvation, and are the ſole ground of the faith of a Chriſtian* [O].

Upon this principle, all impoſed ſubſcriptions to articles of faith, and religious doctrines, conceived in unſcriptural terms, and inforced by human authority, are utterly unwarrantable, and not to be defended but by arguments and pretences, highly diſhonourable to the ſacred writings, and, in many caſes, contradictory to the expreſs contents of them.

But, foraſmuch as there never yet was any inſtance of a proſperous uſurpation deſtitute of advocates to lay in for it a claim of right and juſtice, it would be ſtrange if this matter of ſubſcription, wherein ſuch large and opulent bodies of men are intereſted, ſhould be left to ſhift for itſelf. What the orators of the church have offered on this behalf we ſhall now briefly conſider.

[O] For a compendious view of the teſtimony of the Fathers to *the ſufficiency of the holy ſcriptures as a rule of religion*, the reader may conſult a book intitled *The Divine Oracles*, written by the learned and candid Mr. *John Brekell*, printed for *Waugh* &c. 1749.

CHAP. II.

The Claim of a Right to eſtabliſh Confeſſions as Teſts of Orthodoxy in Proteſtant Churches, briefly conſidered.

THE fundamental poſition, on which the authority of eſtabliſhed confeſſions in Proteſtant communions depends, is this. "Every "particular church, conſidered as a ſociety, has "a *right*, as other ſocieties have, to ſecure its own "peace and welfare, by all lawful means; and "conſequently, to preſcribe ſuch terms of com-"munion as appear to be moſt expedient for the "purpoſe; provided that nothing be required, "under this pretence, which is contrary to the "word of God, or inconſiſtent with the liberty "of other churches."

To this it has been anſwered in ſhort, "That, "by admitting the principle of ſelf-defence and "ſelf-preſervation in matters of religion, all the "perſecutions of the Heathens againſt the Chri-"ſtians, and even the Popiſh Inquiſition, may be "juſtified [*A*]." If the church of *England*, for example, has a right to fix her own terms of communion, and, in conſequence of that, to ſecure the obedience of her members by temporal re-

[*A*] See Biſhop *Hoadley's* Speech for the Repeal of the Occaſional Conformity and Schiſm Acts, in *Tindal's* Continuation of *Rapin Thoyras*, 8vo. vol. xxvii. p. 237.

wards

wards and penalties; the church of *Portugal* muſt, upon the ſame principles, have an equal right to ſecure herſelf by the diſcipline of an *holy office*, or how otherwiſe ſhe thinks proper.

The proviſo, that "church-ordinances be a-"greeable to the word of God," will not in the preſent caſe help the Proteſtant churches at all. *Eſtabliſhed* confeſſions, being human compoſitions, muſt either be ſubject to examination by the private judgment of thoſe who profeſs (as all Proteſtants do) to make the written word their only rule of religion; or elſe the church muſt claim a right of interpreting the ſcriptures for all her members, excluſive of the right of private judgment [*B*]. The former of theſe principles manifeſtly precludes the right of the church to eſtabliſh *any thing* as a condition of Chriſtian communion, without the previous conſent of *all* her members; that is to ſay, of all who, without that condition, would have a right to Chriſtian communion [*C*]. The latter, indeed, veſts the

[*B*] The late Biſhop *Conybeare*, in his famous Subſcription-Sermon, argues from the *conſent* required by the Apoſtles to *their* doctrines, to the *conſent* required by ſucceeding church-governors to *human* articles. This fallacy has been too apt to paſs without examination: but the ſuppoſition upon which it is ſupported, is indeed neither more nor leſs than this, "Scri-"pture truths and the church's explications ſtand upon the "ſame authority."

[*C*] Honeſt old *Rogers*, by *the church which hath authority in controverſies of faith*, underſtands not only the *aggregate body*, but *every member of ſound judgment in the ſame*. Cath. Doct. Art. xx. Propoſ. 3. well knowing that every intelligent Chriſtian, with the ſcriptures before him, is, upon Proteſtant prin-

church with a full meaſure of authority to eſtabliſh what ſhe pleaſes; but then it is an authority which every Proteſtant church moſt expreſsly diſclaims, and condemns in the church of *Rome* as an impudent and groundleſs uſurpation.

There is indeed nothing more evident, than that every Chriſtian of capacity hath a right to ſearch the ſcriptures; a right which he cannot transfer, either to any church, or to any ſingle perſon, becauſe it is his indiſpenſable duty to exerciſe it perſonally for himſelf. And, if it is his duty to *ſearch*, it muſt alſo be his duty to *determine* for himſelf; and, if he finds juſt cauſe, to diſſent from any or all the human eſtabliſhments upon earth.

Some writers on this ſubject diſcover an inclination to deny the right of private judgment in *every caſe* where it is oppoſed to church-authority. Theſe we leave to reconcile their principles with their ſeparation from *Rome*. Others attempt by various arguments (ſome of which will occur hereafter) to prove, that the authority of the church to frame and ſettle confeſſions of faith and doctrine for all her members, is perfectly

ciples, and in decrees of this nature, *a church to himſelf*. This leaves no room for Biſhop *Burnet's* diſtinction between an infallible authority, and an authority of order, which laſt, he faintly inſinuates, might be ſafely intruſted with the body of the clergy. But his Lordſhip, to do him juſtice, qualifies this with a *proviſo*, that this body is *properly diſpoſed* for the province.—Perhaps it might be as difficult to find ſuch a body of men, as to find ſingle perſons without miſtakes. See Biſhop *Burnet's* Expoſition, fol. p. 195.

conſiſtent

conſiſtent with the rights of private judgment. But, to diſcover the fallacy of all arguments to this purpoſe, it is only neceſſary to conſider, that, if this ſuppoſed authority was vigorouſly exerted, and applied in *all* caſes (as it ought to be, if the authority is *real*) and if, on the other hand, the people were diligent and careful in ſearching the ſcriptures every one for himſelf (as all Proteſtants agree they ought to do) the conſequence would moſt probably be, that the far greater part of honeſt and ſenſible Chriſtians would be excluded from the communion of every church which has an eſtabliſhed confeſſion. For where is there one of theſe confeſſions which does not contain ſome very material deciſions, from which an intelligent Chriſtian, who hath duly examined the ſcriptures, may not reaſonably *diſſent?* I had almoſt ſaid, where is there one of them to which a knowing and thinking Chriſtian can *aſſent* in all points, without proſtituting his underſtanding and conſcience to the doctrines and commandments of men?—I ſay, a *knowing* and *thinking* Chriſtian; for he muſt have conſidered the caſe before us very ſuperficially, who does not perceive, that the adherence of ſuch numbers to the peculiar doctrines of the church from which they receive their denomination, and even to ſome doctrines common to the creeds and confeſſions of all churches, which call themſelves orthodox, is owing to their ignorance, their indolence, their ſecularity, or the early prejudices of education, which are known to be the unhappy circumſtan-

ces

ces of the common people, all over the Chriſtian world.

Some zealous men have, indeed, inferred a neceſſity for confeſſions, and conſequently an authority in the church to eſtabliſh them, from theſe very indiſpoſitions and incapacities of the people to examine and judge for themſelves. But, tho' this is perhaps the beſt plea of *right* which the church has to alledge, yet wiſer and cooler advocates for confeſſions chooſe not to abide by an argument, which would equally vindicate the church of *Rome* with reſpect to many of her impoſitions. Not to mention, that theſe *indiſpoſitions* and *incapacities* in the clergy would be but an aukward reaſon for making *their* aſſent and ſubſcription to confeſſions an indiſpenſable condition of being admitted into the church as *teachers*.

Theſe prudent gentlemen, therefore, ſeem inclined to acquit the laity of all concern with eſtabliſhed confeſſions, and to confine their authority to the clergy; inſomuch that (if I underſtand ſome of our modern caſuiſts on this ſubject) a layman, if he can get over his own ſcruples, may pray, hear the word, and even communicate with what Proteſtant church he pleaſes [*D*]. If

[*D*] The opinions, indeed, of theſe modern divines on this article are not uniform. Many worthy miniſters of ſeveral denominations, whoſe catholic principles would incline them to reject no man who ſhould attend their communions with decency and reverence, may ſtill think themſelves obliged (and very reaſonably) to have reſpect to the ſenſe of the congregation where they conſtantly officiate. Others, I know, think differently, and this occaſions a variety in practice. See *Whiſton's*

this

this be really true, we have reaſon to be thankful for better times; for undoubtedly ſome of us have remembered worſe.

But, however this matter might turn out upon the experiment, certain it is, that, in ſo far as the laity are allowed not to be bound by theſe church confeſſions, the point of *right* to eſtabliſh them as teſts of orthodoxy is fairly given up, as well

Memoirs, vol. II. p. 485. and *Killingworth's* Examination of Dr. *Foſter's* Sermon on *Catholic Communion*. — "It ſeems to "me," ſays Mr. *La Roche*, "that Proteſtants and Catholics "ſhould not diſcourage thoſe heterodox men who come to "their altars." *Abridgment*, vol. II. p 613. And ſo it ſeems to me too, provided ſuch heterodox men come there of choice, *ſolely* for a religious end, and behave reverendly and decently when they are there. But, when Mr. *La Roche* adds, "The "church of *England* is the wiſeſt national church in the world "upon this head," he refers to a very different caſe, wherein indeed the wiſdom of the church had no ſhare. Moſt of the biſhops, and among them the two archbiſhops *Wake* and *Dawes*, oppoſed the repeal of the act againſt *occaſional* conformity with all their ſtrength: An act which, all the world knows, diſcouraged heterodox men from coming to our altars. *Tindal's Contin.* 8vo. vol. XXVII. p. 231—241. And to admit theſe heterodox men to our altars, without previouſly revoking their *wicked errors*, is againſt our cannon-law to this hour. In the mean time, the *Teſt Act* brings many men to our altars (and it is well if not ſome infidels among them) who would never come there of choice, or on a religious account. In the late altercations concerning the bill for naturalizing the *Jews*, mention was made of ſome *Jews* in K. *William's* reign, who actually came to our *Chriſtian* altars to qualify themſelves for naturalization. *Lond. Mag.* for *July* 1753. p. 306. We are apt to value ourſelves mightily on the reſpect which foreign Proteſtants expreſs for our church: but there are caſes where this reſpect does us no honour. Such a compliment as this of Mr. *La Roche* is enough to put a ſenſible Church-of-England-

for

for the clergy as the laity; ſince whatever rule is ſufficient to direct the faith and practice of the layman, muſt likewiſe be ſufficient to direct the teaching of the clergyman, unleſs the clergyman may be obliged to teach doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe or to practiſe.

"But," ſay ſome men, "if there be really an "*expedience* and *utility* in theſe public formularies, "called Confeſſions of Faith, we may well infer a "*right* to eſtabliſh them, although concerning "ſuch right the ſcripture ſhould be ſilent. Many "things relating to public worſhip, and public "edification, muſt be left to the prudence and "diſcretion of church-governors for the time "being; and if confeſſions are manifeſtly uſeful "and expedient for the church, there muſt be an "authority lodged ſomewhere to prepare and in-"force them."

The *expedience* and *utility* of confeſſions will be very particularly conſidered in the next chapter; for which reaſon I ſhall forbear to ſay any thing farther to this plea at preſent, ſave only a word or two concerning this method of arguing from

man, who knows the true ſtate of the caſe, out of countenance. A law inducing men to profeſs, by a ſolemn act, that their religious opinions are what they really are not, is no mark either of wiſdom or Chriſtian charity in *any* church. But this point has been ſo thoroughly diſcuſſed and cleared up by the late Biſhop of *Winchester*, that there is no danger it ſhould ever be thrown into confuſion again; though, more lately, ſome ingenious pains have been taken that way, *viz.* in the Book of Alliance between Church and State, written by another Biſhop.

the *probable expedience* or utility of any thing in religion to a right or authority to imploy or introduce it.

No wiſe man, who hath duly conſidered the genius and deſign of the Chriſtian religion, will look for much utility or expedience, where the church or church-governors go beyond their *plain commiſſion*. And, whatever may be left to the prudence and diſcretion of church-governors, there is *ſo much more* left to the conſcience of every Chriſtian in his perſonal capacity, that it greatly behoves ſuch governors to beware they incroach not on a province which is without their limits. This conſideration has always diſpoſed me to reaſon in a manner juſt contrary to theſe gentlemen, namely, from the authority to the utility of religious meaſures. My opinion is, that where the methods of promoting chriſtianity are matter of ſcripture precept, or plainly recommended by ſcripture-precedents, there ſuch methods ſhould be ſtrictly followed and adhered to, even though the *expedience* of them ſhould not be very evident *a priori*. We can have no pretence of *right* or *authority* to alter ſuch methods for others ſeemingly more expedient, while ſo very much of the effect of religion, or, in other words, of its utility, is made by our bleſſed Maſter to depend on the inward frame of every man's heart, into which ordinary church-governors can have no farther diſcernment than other men. On this account, thoſe means of edification, public or private, will always, in my eſteem, bid the faireſt

for

ſucceſs, which are the trueſt copies of apoſtolic originals. Notions of expedience in any thing more than theſe, when there is nothing to judge by but ſuperficial appearances, have frequently led men to interfere very unſeaſonably with the dictates of other mens conſciences; and no greater miſchief has ever been occaſioned by any thing in the Chriſtian church, than by thoſe very expedients of human prudence, from which the beſt effects have been expected.

Among other inſtances which might be given to verify this obſervation, we have one at home, in which all thoſe who are called to the miniſtry are too nearly concerned not to be capable judges. After ſome progreſs had been made in the reformation of the church of *England*, it was thought to be a great defect, that a public confeſſion of faith and doctrine ſhould ſtill be wanting [*E*]. To ſupply this defect, the *Articles of Religion* were compiled, publiſhed, and enjoined to be ſubſcribed. Theſe Articles (with ſome alterations which paſſed in thoſe days for improvements) are ſtill ſubſcribed by, at leaſt, one hundred of our miniſters every year. That above one fifth of this number do not ſubſcribe or aſſent to theſe Articles, in one uniform ſenſe, we have great reaſon to believe; and yet the avowed purpoſe of this general ſubſcription is *to prevent diverſity of opinions*. And indeed, conſidering to what ſorts of men this teſt is made indiſpenſable, it is, I

[*E*] *Burnet's* Hiſt. Reform. vol. II. p. 166. and vol. III. p. 210.

think,

think, as much as can be expected, if another fifth ſubſcribe them in *any* ſenſe, but the ſenſe they have of wanting preferment in the church, if they ſhould not.

It is true, all theſe perſons miniſter in their ſeveral congregations by one common form, framed, for the general, on the model of the confeſſion they have ſubſcribed; and ſo far all has a fair and honeſt appearance, and, while they keep their thoughts to themſelves, is conſiſtent enough. But no ſooner are many of them at liberty to deliver their own or other men's ſentiments from the pulpit, but the eſtabliſhed ſyſtem is laid aſide, or perhaps, if it comes in their way, quite overſet [*F*], and many things written and uttered with all freedom, by different perſons, equally irreconcileable to each other, as well as to the orthodox confeſſion.

What now is the *utility* or *expedience* in this affair of ſubſcription, which will attone for the ſcandal brought upon the cauſe of chriſtianity by this unſcriptural article of church diſcipline? To ſay nothing of the diſtreſs of many a conſcientious miniſter under the unhappy dilemma of, *ſubſcribe* or *ſtarve*; is it poſſible that the ignorance, the indolence, or the inſincerity of the

[*F*] "All thoſe who write and preach in this nation are not "her [the church of *England's*] ſons, any more than they of "*Geneva*, or *Scotland*, or *New-England*, are," ſays Biſhop *Ruſt*, Defence of *Origen*, &c. *Phœnix*, vol. I. p. 83. So that this is no new complaint. See likewiſe Dr. *Hartley's* Obſervations on Man, vol. II. p. 354. and a remarkable inſtance in *A Defence of the* Eſſay on Spirit, p. 24.

reſt

reſt ſhould not make conſiderable impreſſions, both upon the friends and enemies of revelation? Suppoſe the herd of mankind were too much employed in other buſineſs to turn their attention of themſelves to remarks of this nature, yet the zeal and eagerneſs of the litigants to expoſe this prevaricatation on either ſide, by caſting their ſubſcriptions in each others teeth, will not ſuffer the moſt incurious mortal to be long uninformed of it, if he ſhould only look into ſome of the commoneſt books of controverſy for his mere amuſement.

The ſum of the whole matter then is this. Lodge your church-authority in what hands you will, and limit it with whatever reſtrictions you think proper, you cannot aſſert to it a right of deciding in controverſies of faith and doctrine, or, in other words, a right to require aſſent to a certain ſenſe of ſcripture, excluſive of other ſenſes, without an unwarrantable interference with thoſe rights of private judgment which are manifeſtly ſecured to every individual by the ſcriptural terms of Chriſtian liberty, and thereby contradicting the original principles of the Proteſtant reformation.

This point being ſettled, the ſquabbles among particular churches concerning their ſuppoſed liberty within their reſpective departments (in ſo far as theſe confeſſions come in queſtion) is about a thing of nought. For none of them having the liberty to eſtabliſh or to preſcribe ſuch doctrinal confeſſions for the whole body, it is matter of

of great indifference (ſetting aſide the ſcandal of it) in what degree they exclude or make room for one another.

But, to give this matter a little conſideration with reſpect to the preſent effects of it upon Chriſtian ſocieties, let us ſuppoſe that Proteſtant churches *have* ſuch a right each within its own confines: The queſtion is, how ſhall one church exerciſe this right, without encroaching on the right of another? Upon the genuine grounds of ſeparation from the church of *Rome*, all particular churches are co-ordinate [G]; they have all the ſame right in an equal degree; and the deciſions of one are, in point of authority, upon the very ſame level with thoſe of another. This being ſo, I do not ſee how it is poſſible for any church to *exerciſe* this right in thoſe inſtances where ſhe eſtabliſhes doctrines *peculiar to herſelf*, and inconſiſtent with the doctrines of other churches, without abridging thoſe churches of their right to eſtabliſh their own doctrines. No

[G] The Proteſtant churches every where ſet up on this principle; what regard they have paid to it ſince, is another affair. One remarkable inſtance may be worth mentioning. "The refugees," ſays Mr. *La Roche*, "who were driven out "of the *Low-Countries* by the Duke of *Alva* in the year 1571, "held a ſynod at *Emden*, and their firſt canon was, that no "church ſhould have dominion over another church." And, to teſtify their ſincerity herein, they put the *French* and *Dutch* confeſſions upon the ſame footing, by ſubſcribing them both. *Abridgment*, vol. I. p. 141. But N. B. The Dutch Confeſſion was not then eſtabliſhed, and theſe were poor friendleſs refugees. 'Tis pity but ſome of them had lived to ſee how ſacredly this canon of *Embden* was obſerved in the ſynod of *Dort*.

church can have a *right* to eſtabliſh any doctrines but upon the ſuppoſition that they are *true*. If the doctrines eſtabliſhed in one church are *true*, the contrary doctrines eſtabliſhed in another church muſt be *falſe*; and, I preſume, no church will contend for a *right* to eſtabliſh *falſe* doctrines. And indeed, whatever may be pretended, this is the very footing upon which all Proteſtant churches have, occaſionally, treated the churches that differed from them, and from whence the concluſion to a diſintereſted byſtander is obvious; namely, that, in conſequence of theſe co-ordinate powers, none of them had a right to eſtabliſh any doctrines, but with the unanimous conſent of all the reſt.

It is true, Proteſtants of one ſtate or country have been tender of condemning the confeſſion of thoſe of another, by any public ſentence; and reaſon good; their powers are limited by their ſituation, and extend not beyond their own departments, nor would their cenſures be regarded elſewhere. But what inſtance is there upon record, where this *liberty* has been allowed (as the co-ordinate principle manifeſtly requires it ſhould be) to more than *one* church in the *ſame* Proteſtant ſtate? Every party, in every Proteſtant ſtate, has, by turns, made ſome attempts to have their religious tenets eſtabliſhed by public authority. In every ſtate, ſome *one* party has ſucceeded; and having ſucceeded, impoſes its own confeſſion upon all the reſt; excluding all diſſenters from more or fewer of the common privileges of citizens, in propor-

tion

tion as the civil magiſtrate is more or leſs in the mood to vindicate, or diſtinguiſh, the ſyſtem he thinks fit to eſpouſe.

This has been the caſe, at different periods, with different churches in the ſame country. And (what is chiefly remarkable to our preſent purpoſe) the party defeated has conſtantly exclaimed againſt the practice, as an unreaſonable, unchriſtian, and wicked tyranny; — the very practice which they themſelves, in their proſperity, endeavoured to ſupport by every claim of right, and to defend by every argument of utility and experience [*H*].

Of this many remarkable examples might be given, in the complaints of church-men of different denominations in adverſity; who, in the day of their exaltation, had carried church-power as far as it could well ſtretch; and who, when the ſeverities of the adverſe party forced theſe lamentations from them, were obliged to plead their cauſe upon principles, which made no re-

[*H*] "It belongeth to ſynods and councils miniſterially to "determine controverſies of faith and caſes of conſcience." *Aſſembly's Confeſſion*, ch. xxxi. art. 3. This hath given occaſion to apply ſome words of *Iſaiah*, viz. *Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged*, to certain diſſenters, who have ſcrupled to ſubſcribe the firſt clauſe of the 20th article of our church. At preſent this wit would be miſapplied. In the year 1718, ſome of the wiſeſt and moſt eminent among the diſſenting miniſters made a noble ſtand againſt ſome impoſers of teſts in their own fraternity. And in the year 1727 more of them refuſed to ſubſcribe this very *Weſtminſter* Confeſſion.

ſerve of authority with reſpect to one ſort of religious ſociety more than another [*I*].

Among others to whom eſtabliſhed confeſſions had been particularly grievous, were the remonſtrants in *Holland*, after the ſynod of *Dort*. Their aſſemblies were prohibited, and their miniſters ſilenced and baniſhed, for no other offence but contradicting certain doctrines, which, as we have ſeen above, the forefathers of their perſecutors held to be of *no importance*, and which had gained no new merit, but that of being eſtabliſhed by law.

One would have imagined that this uſage would have cured the Remonſtrants of all good liking to *confeſſions* for ever. And ſo perhaps it

[*I*] Thus the ingenious Biſhop *Taylor*, pleading for *the liberty of propheſying*, at a time when, to uſe his own expreſſion, *the veſſel of the church was daſhed in pieces*, found it neceſſary to aſſert againſt the taſk-maſters of thoſe days, that, "If we have "found out what foundation Chriſt and his Apoſtles did lay; "that is, what body and ſyſtem of articles ſimply neceſſary they "taught and required of us to believe; we need not, we can- "not go any further for foundation, WE CANNOT ENLARGE "THAT SYSTEM OR COLLECTION." p. 17. — But, when the ſhattered veſſel came to be refitted, the ſkilful pilots found ſhe neither had been, nor ever could be, ſteered *to the port they aimed at*, by theſe directions. And accordingly, when they got poſſeſſion of the helm, they adopted the old *enlarged* ſyſtem, adding as much more of their own to the collection, as they perceived might be neceſſary to conduct the veſſel in ſafety to the *golden coaſt*; without paying the leaſt regard to the remonſtrances of thoſe, who claimed an equal property in the bottom, and who inceſſantly clamoured, that neither the freight nor the ſteerage were proper for the port to which they were bound, and which, as all ſides outwardly agreed, lay in a *kingdom that was not of this world*.

did,

did, of their good-liking to *all* confeſſions — but *one of their own framing*, which *Epiſcopius* and his fellows actually compoſed, ſubſcribed, and publiſhed, in this ſtate of exile.

This ſtep was ſo very extraordinary for men in their condition, whoſe diſtreſſes had been occaſioned by enforcing a ſyſtem drawn up in the ſame form, that they rightly judged the world would expect ſome ſatisfactory account of it, which therefore they attempt to give, in a long Apology prefixed to their Confeſſion; wherein, not contented with alledging ſuch inducements as might well be ſuppoſed to oblige men in their ſituation to explain and avow their principles to the public, they enter into a particular detail of arguments in favour of confeſſions in general; dropping indeed the point of *right* to eſtabliſh them as teſts of truth, but inſiſting largely on their *utility* and *expedience* in a variety of caſes; and, as they ſeem to me to have brought together the whole merits of the cauſe on that head of defence, I ſhall attend them in the next chapter, with ſome particular conſiderations on the ſeveral articles of their plea.

CHAP. III.

The Apology of the Remonſtrants *for Confeſſions, in conſideration of their* Expedience *and* Utility, *examined.*

IT had been objected to confeſſions in general, that "they derogated from the authority and "ſufficiency of the ſcriptures; that they en-"croached upon the liberty of private conſcience, "and the independency of Proteſtant churches, "and that they tended to nothing better than "ſeparation and ſchiſm."

The Remonſtrants reply, that "theſe objec-"tions did not affect confeſſions themſelves, but "only the *abuſe* of them." But however, as the objectors had ſo many inſtances to appeal to where confeſſions had been, and ſtill were thus *abuſed*, and the Remonſtrants ſo few, if any, where they were not, the latter were obliged to ſet out with very ample conceſſions.

"Undoubtedly," ſay they, "thoſe phraſes and "forms of ſpeaking, in which God and Chriſt "delivered themſelves at firſt, for the inſtruction "of unlearned and ordinary men, muſt needs be "ſufficient for the inſtruction of Chriſtians in all "ſucceeding ages; — conſequently it is poſſible "that the church of Chriſt may not only *be*, but "alſo that it may *well be*, without thoſe human "forms and explications, called Confeſſions [*A*]."

[*A*] Preface to the Remonſtrants Confeſſion, publiſhed in Engliſh at *London*, 1676. p. 12, 13.

One

One would wonder now, what the Remonſtrants could find to ſay for the ſupport of their ſide of the queſtion. For, if the phraſes and forms of ſpeaking, made uſe of in the written word, are ſufficient for the inſtruction of unlearned and ordinary men in all things which concern the worſhip of God, and their own and others everlaſting ſalvation; and if, as the Objectors inſiſted, and the Remonſtrants could not deny, many and great evils were, *for the moſt part*, occaſioned by ſuch phraſes and forms of ſpeaking in confeſſions, as are not to be found in ſcripture, the Objectors were fairly authorized to conclude, not barely for the *poſſibility* that the church of Chriſt might *well be*, but for the *certainty* that it might *better be*, without ſuch human forms, than with them.

The Remonſtrants, however, attempt to recover their ground as follows. "If propheſyings, "or interpretations of ſcripture, ſay theſe Apo- "logiſts, are not unprofitable, yea rather, if they "be ſometimes in certain reſpects neceſſary, when "propoſed by teachers and paſtors in univerſities "and churches, or other Chriſtian aſſemblies, for "the information of the ignorant, &c. in familiar, "clear, and uſual expreſſions, though not in the "very words of ſcripture; it cannot ſeem unpro- "fitable, much leſs unlawful or hurtful, if *more* "miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt do, by mutual con- "ſent, joint ſtudies and endeavours, for the great- "er illuſtration of divine truth, removing of "ſlanders, edifying the Chriſtian community, or "other holy and pious purpoſes, publicly open

" and declare their judgments upon the mean-
" ings of ſcripture, and that in certain compoſed
" forms [*B*]."

It is no eaſy matter to diſcover the drift of this argument. Do the Remonſtrants mean to inſiſt on the ſuperior influence and authority of *more* miniſters, in the buſineſs of expounding the ſcriptures, in compariſon with ſingle paſtors or profeſſors? By no means. Upon any ſuppoſition of this nature, the *Belgic* Confeſſion had an authority which rendered their revolt from it inexcuſeable [*C*]. Would they be underſtood to ſay, that Confeſſions compoſed by the joint ſtudies of ſeveral miniſters, are as uſeful as ordinary ſermons and lectures in churches and univerſities? No,

[*B*] Ibid. p. 13, 14. Having not the original Latin at hand, I am obliged to make uſe of the very mean Engliſh tranſlation above referred to, picking out the ſtrength and merit of the argument as well as one can from a confuſed arrangement of obſolete words.

[*C*] Dr. *Stebbing*, indeed, would have every one to own, that " Thoſe explications of ſcripture, which, after the matureſt de-
" liberation, and the uſe of all proper helps, are agreed upon
" by *a whole body of men*, are leſs liable to be faulty and de-
" fective, than thoſe which particular perſons may frame to
" themſelves." *Rat. Enq.* p. 29. In plain Engliſh, *You will always be ſafeſt with the majority.* For where is the body of men who will not pretend to the *matureſt deliberation*, and the uſe of the *propereſt helps?* But the Remonſtrants were men of ſenſe, and ſaw, what Dr. *Stebbing's* cauſe required him to conceal, namely, that conſiderations of this kind muſt, in the event, drive every man headlong into the eſtabliſhed religion, whatever it happens to be, or by whom ſoever deviſed; whether by a ſynagoge of Phariſees, a Turkiſh divan, a council of *Trent*, or, what the Remonſtrants liked as little as any of them, a ſynod of *Dort*.

they

they make no ſuch compariſon; they only infer, with much ambiguity, from the premiſes, that *Confeſſions*, with the circumſtances mentioned, *cannot ſeem unprofitable.*

But, be their meaning what you will, the caſes of interpreting ſcripture in occaſional prophefyings, and in ſtated confeſſions, are diſſimilar in ſo many reſpects, that nothing can be inferred from the *utility* of the former, in favour of the latter: but rather the contrary.

If prophefyings, or interpretations of ſcripture in Chriſtian aſſemblies, are not delivered in familiar, clear, and uſual forms of ſpeech, they are neither neceſſary nor profitable; nor can any thing be inferred from the utility of *ſuch* prophefyings at all. On the other hand, if the ſcriptures are opened and explained to the people in eaſy and familiar expreſſions, by their ordinary paſtors, what poſſible uſe can you find for a ſyſtematical confeſſion? unleſs you think fit to eſtabliſh it as a neceſſary ſupplement to the holy ſcripture, and then you once more return the queſtion to the point of *right*.

Again, What the preacher delivers from the pulpit, or the profeſſor from his chair, they deliver as the ſentiments and concluſions of ſingle men, who have no authority to enforce their explications, any farther than their own good ſenſe, integrity, accuracy, and judgment, make way for them. For the reſt, their doctrines may be queſtioned, the men themſelves called upon to review them, and, if they ſee reaſon, correct, and even

retract

retract them, not only without offence, but, in ſome caſes, with advantage to the common faith. But doctrines, opinions, and explications of ſcripture, reduced to a fixed form, and avowed by the public act of many ſubſcribing miniſters, (who by the way are full as likely to be fallible in a body, as in their perſonal capacity) put on quite another aſpect. In that caſe all examination is precluded. No one ſubſcriber is impowered to explain or correct for the reſt. Nor can any of them retract, without ſtanding in the light of a ſchiſmatic and a revolter from his brethren.

It is to little purpoſe that the remonſtrants would limit the ſtreſs to be laid upon confeſſions, to their agreement with truth, and reaſon, and ſcripture. The matter of complaint is, that this agreement ſhould be predetermined by the deciſion of theſe leading ſubſcribers, in ſuch ſort, as to diſcourage all free examination, and conſtrain the people to acquieſce in a precarious ſyſtem, by the mere influence of great names and reſpectable authorities, which, without any additional weight, are too apt to overawe the judgment of all ſorts of men, even in caſes of the greateſt importance.

The *expedience* of Confeſſions in no wiſe appearing from theſe general conſiderations, let us now ſee what particular uſes the Remonſtrants have for them.

And here they tell us "of times when groſs "and noxious errors prevail in the world; when "neceſſary heads of belief are neglected, and "many

"many points of faith urged and inſiſted on, "which are not neceſſary; when no diſtinction "is made between doctrines that are barely pro- "fitable, and thoſe which are abſolutely neceſ- "ſary; when human inventions are bound upon "men's conſciences; and laſtly, when many "falſe and groundleſs doctrines are palliated "and cloathed in ſcripture-language. In theſe "times, they think it not barely expedient, but "in a good meaſure neceſſary, that paſtors of "churches ſhould adviſe and conſult together, "and, if they perceive that *blind miſerable mortals* "may be aſſiſted in their ſearches after Truth, "in ſuch days of danger, by a clear elucidation "of divine meanings, then may they profitably "ſet forth the ſame, &c." [*D*]

But in the firſt place, How does it appear that Confeſſions have more of this *elucidating* property than other ſorts of Reſcripts? It is a common complaint, that theſe formularies of doctrine, abounding in artificial and ſcholaſtic terms, are rather apt to perplex and confound things that are otherwiſe clear and plain, than to illuſtrate any thing with a ſuperior degree of perſpicuity. And I am really afraid there is no room to except the very confeſſion to which this apology is prefixed.

But to let this alone; there occurs another difficulty, with reſpect to this *elucidation*, not ſo eaſily got over. It is well known, that ſome opinions have been formally condemned by the framers of Creeds and Confeſſions, as groſs and

[*D*] Pag. 14, 15.

noxious

noxious errors, which, however, have been maintained by very solid reasoning, not to say considerable authorities, from the scriptures themselves.

"There are few heresies," says Dr. *Stebbing*, "which great learning and good sense have not "been called in to countenance: he therefore, "that would effectually crush them, must take "away these supports [E]." That is to say, he *must*, if he *can*; and that has not always proved an easy task, even when attempted by the accumulated skill and learning of Councils or Convocations. These are difficulties, out of which *blind miserable mortals* are rarely extricated by confessions, which are rather of the *dogmatical*, than the *didactic* strain; and oftentimes leave the reader to guess at the reasons, why the compilers are so positive in some of their assertions, for which they do not condescend to offer any proof. These *noxious errors* too, have sometimes procured themselves to be established by another party of Confessionists and Creedmakers; in which case, these authorized formularies are so far from being of any real *utility* to an unprejudiced inquirer, that they only serve to destroy the force and virtue of each other.

Again, if confessions are really profitable towards suppressing these gross and noxious errors, it must be profitable, and in the same proportion, needful, to inlarge and amplify them as often as such errors arise, and the birth of every

[E] *Rational Enquiry*, pag. 47.

new

new hereſy, ſhould always be attended with a new article in the confeſſion [*F*].

Perhaps there is ſcarce a year paſſes over, in any country where the preſſes are open, and men's tongues at liberty, without bringing forth ſome new opinion, or reviving ſome old one with new circumſtances, contrary to, or at leaſt different from the approved and orthodox ſyſtem; and conſequently within the deſcription of a groſs and noxious error. Suppoſe the requiſite ſtrictures on theſe heterodoxies had been added to the confeſſions of the ſeveral churches where they have appeared for the laſt two hundred years; to what a comfortable bulk would an *Harmony* of theſe confeſſions have amounted by this time? what plenty of *elucidation* might ſuch an *Harmony* have afforded to *blind miſerable mortals*? and what a field is here opened for declaiming againſt the indolence and drowſineſs of our appointed watchmen, who, during this long and perilous interval, have been ſilent upon ſo many important ſubjects; ſuffering this multitude of hereſies to paſs uncorrected

[*F*] One article of difference between K. Charles I. and the Scotch Proteſtors, *anno* 1638, turned upon the neceſſity of *renewing* and *applying* confeſſions of faith to every *preſent* emergency of the church. This the Scots compared to the riding of *Merches*, or boundaries, upon every new "Incroachment." And indeed, ſuppoſing the *utility* of confeſſions to be what the Remonſtrants ſay it is, King *Charles*'s whole convocation could not have furniſhed him with an anſwer to this argument of the North Britons, in behalf of their new formulary. See *Ruſhworth's* Collections, vol. II. pag. 774.

by any public cenſure, even while their partizans have been inceſſantly preaching up to us the great *utility* of confeſſions, as the only ſovereign antidotes againſt them?

But, inſtead of inveighing againſt our ſuperiors for any omiſſions of this kind, let us make uſe of this very circumſtance to point out to them the *inutility* (perhaps ſomething worſe) of our preſent eſtabliſhed formularies of faith and doctrine.——What is become of all thoſe hereſies againſt which none of theſe public proviſions have been made? Why, many of them are dead and ſunk down into utter oblivion, as if they had never been; others being left open to free debate, have had no worſe effect in religion, than other harmleſs and innocent, and even edifying problems, are allowed to have in literature and philoſophy:—Whence the concluſion ſeems to be inevitable, that the malignity of other hereſies (and perhaps the very exiſtence of ſome of them) has been perpetuated, *only* by the reſpectable notice that ſome church or other has thought fit to take of them in an eſtabliſhed confeſſion.

I will preſume to ſupport the juſtice of this remark, by an inſtance or two in our own eſtabliſhment.

In the 42d of K. *Edward's* Articles, a formal cenſure was paſſed upon the reſtorers of *Origen's* opinion concerning *the temporary duration of future puniſhments.* But in the Articles of 1562, this cenſure is not to be found. Undoubtedly

the

the queſtion is of great importance with reſpect to the influences and ſanctions of the Chriſtian religion; nor is there any point of theology upon which churches may be ſuppoſed to *decide* more reaſonably, than this. And yet, had the negative of this problem, *Whether future puniſhments ſhall be eternal?* ſtill been ſtigmatized with this heretical brand, we ſhould probably have wanted ſeveral learned and accurate diſquiſitions on the ſubject, from ſome of our moſt eminent writers, ſuch as *Ruſt, Tillotſon, Hartly, &c.* By whoſe reſearches we have gained at leaſt a clearer ſtate of the caſe, and a more accurate inſight into the language of the ſcriptures relative to it, than the compilers of the article had before them; without laying any invidious prejudice on the judgment or conſcience of any man living, or precluding the right that every Chriſtian has to determine for himſelf, in a caſe where his intereſt is ſo great and important.

Again, the 40th of theſe original articles, "affirmed it to be contrary to the orthodox "faith, to maintain that the ſouls of men de-"ceaſed, do ſleep, without any manner of ſenſe, "to the day of judgment, &c." This was likewiſe diſmiſſed in 1562: ſince when, the doctrine condemned, and (ſome few faint efforts excepted) all controverſy concerning it have lain dormant, till very lately, that ſomething very like a demonſtration that our firſt reformers were miſtaken on this head, has been offered to the

world [G]; which probably had never ſeen the light, if an aſſent to this 40th article had ſtill remained a part of our miniſterial ſubſcription.

As to what the remonſtrants ſay of the neglect of neceſſary heads of belief, urging and inſiſting on points of faith, which are not neceſſary; binding human inventions on men's conſcientes; miſapplications of ſcripture-expreſſions and authorities, and the like, if theſe are not to be prevented or corrected by the current labours of able and honeſt paſtors, joined to the juſtice which every man owes to himſelf, in ſearching the ſcriptures for ſatisfaction in all doubtful caſes; it is in vain to expect any relief from confeſſions, many of which, if not all, are accuſed on ſome ſide, of theſe very abuſes which the remonſtrants propoſe by their means to reform.

2. Another uſe which the remonſtrants have for confeſſions is, "to obviate foul and diſhoneſt "ſlanders, calumnies, and ſuſpicions, with which "thoſe honeſt and upright divines, who undertake to ſet *blind miſerable mortals* right, may be "ſoiled by their adverſaries. In which caſe, ſay "they, who is there that will not think them

[G] In a ſermon on *the Nature and End of Death*, and a curious appendix ſubjoined to the third edition of *Conſiderations on the Theory of Religion*, &c. By Dr. *Edmund Law*, the reverend, learned, and worthy Maſter of *St. Peter's* College, *Camb.* How many doctrines are *defended*, how many are *not oppoſed*, not becauſe they are to be found in the New Teſtament, but becauſe they are *eſtabliſhed* in a Liturgy, or *decided* in an Article?

"conſtrained

" conſtrained to inform the Chriſtian world, what " manner of perſons they are in religion, by an " ingenuous confeſſion of their judgment: eſpe- " cially if they ſee that, unleſs they do it, all " good men will be eſtranged from them, their " proſelytes return to their vomit, and, conſe- " quently, the truth of God be wounded through " the ſides of their wronged reputation [*H*]."

The remonſtrants had here an eye to their own particular caſe, and therefore we ſhall do no wrong to their argument, if we determine the value of it by their particular ſucceſs. One of the calumnies complained of in this preface, is that, " the remonſtrants concealed ſome things, " of which they were aſhamed to give their judg- " ment in public." How do they obviate this calumny by their confeſſion? How does their publicly *confeſſing ſome* of their doctrines prove that they had *concealed none?* They do not venture to ſay, that in this formulary they had declared their judgment on *every* point of theology. On the contrary, they admit, that they had purpoſely *waved* certain thorny and ſubtile queſtions, *leaving them to the idle and curious.* Might not the doctrines relative to *theſe* queſtions, be the very things they were aſhamed to confeſs? and if ſo, what is their apology for *waving* them, but mere ſubterfuge and evaſion?

But, indeed, it was worſe with the poor remonſtrants than all this came to. No ſooner was their confeſſion made public, than their ad-

[*H*] Pag. 16, &c.

verſaries fell upon them with a freſh load of calumnies, taking occaſion from the confeſſion itſelf; accuſing it of "ſwarming with dreadful "hereſies from the beginning to the end, not ex- "cepting even the very title page [*I*]".

What is now to be done? Shall the remonſtrants go to work again, and publiſh a *ſecond* confeſſion to confute theſe new calumnies? and after that, if future occaſion ſhould be given, (as they might be ſure it would) a *third*, and a *fourth*? No, common ſenſe would tell them, it was all labour in vain, and that there is but one way of refuting theſe endleſs calumnies effectually, namely, by confronting the accuſation with the matter of fact, and appealing from time to time, to a ſort of evidence, which formularies of confeſſion will not admit of.

The remonſtrants ſeem to have been aware, that it might be thought ſufficient to obviate all charges of hereſy, if the accuſed parties were only to expreſs themſelves in ſcripture-language. "But, they tell us, that this very thing is charg- "ed upon them as a crime, that, under the words "of ſcripture, they cheriſh in their boſoms the "worſt meanings, and moſt prejudicial to the

[*I*] *Bayle's* Dict. Art. EPISCOPIUS Rem. F. See likewiſe *la Roche* Abridg. p. 685. who mentions indeed only the cenſures of two private miniſters on the remonſtrants confeſſion, an effect, I am afraid, of his extreme and too viſible partiality for their cauſe. They who will take the trouble to turn to *Bayle, loc. cit.* will ſee, that the words tranſcribed above, are part of a cenſure of this confeſſion, publiſhed by the profeſſors of *Leyden*.

"glory

"glory of God, and the ſalvation of man, which "reduces them to a neceſſity, whether they will "or no—by ſome public declaration of their "judgment, to purge themſelves, and to main-"tain and defend the ſincerity of their be-"lief [K]."

Well then, let us conſider how this caſe ſtands. The *Calviniſts* charge it upon the *Remonſtrants* as a crime, that, under ſcripture words, they cheriſh the worſt meanings. The remonſtrants ſay it is a calumny, and appeal to their confeſſion. The ſame *remonſtrants* bring the ſame accuſation againſt another ſet of men, as we have ſeen above. May not theſe men ſay too, it is a calumny? May not they too defend themſelves in a confeſſion? and at what does all this futile reaſoning aim, but at proving, that whatever is once got into a confeſſion, muſt of neceſſity be infallibly true?

Where indeed any particular church can procure an eſtabliſhment for its confeſſion, in ſuch ſort as to make it a rule of teaching, and a teſt of orthodoxy for all her paſtors and and profeſſors, a bridle upon the tongue, and a ſhackle upon the pen-hand of every man who is diſpoſed to ſpeak or write againſt it, formularies of this kind *may* have their *uſe* and *expedience*, in *ſecuring the privileges, intereſts, and emoluments of that particular church*; and, being armed with coercive penalties, may likewiſe operate in the ſeveral caſes abovementioned. But according to our apologiſts, theſe are the circumſtances in which the abuſes of confeſſions do chiefly conſiſt. "They are not

[K] Pag. 17, 18.

" for allowing confeſſions to be the limits and " bounds within which religion is to be ſhut up; " the *indices* of ſtraight and crooked, or the an- " vil to which all controverſies of faith are to be " brought; nor would they have any man tyed " to them, but juſt ſo far, and ſo long, as he is " convinced in his conſcience, that the doctrine " of the confeſſion accords with the ſcrip- " ture [*L*]."

This is juſt and reaſonable: and it would be both unjuſt and unreaſonable, to deny the remonſtrants their due praiſe for their moderation, tenderneſs, and honeſt regard to the rights of private judgment. But however, nothing is more certain, than that by theſe limitations and conceſſions, they give up all the peculiar *utility* and *expedience* of theſe ſyſtematical forms, for which they profeſs themſelves advocates in other parts of this preface; leaving them no more virtue or efficacy in inſtructing the ignorant, confuting errors and hereſies, or ſilencing calumnies, than may be reaſonably claimed by, and aſcribed to, the writings and diſcourſes of any particular divine of judgment and learning.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but that in bringing down confeſſions ſo very low, particularly in their *three-fold caution* concerning the uſe of them, the remonſtrants took a particular aim at the ſynod of *Dort*, by whoſe *proud cruelty* they had ſuffered ſo much. In *their* ſituation, to have put any high value upon public

[*L*] Pag. 20, 21.

confeſſions,

confeſſions, had been to preclude themſelves from all reaſonable apology for their conduct. And yet who knows, in what all this moderation and lenity would have ended, had the remonſtrants been fortunate enough to have engaged the civil powers, and, with them, the majority on their ſide? For my part, I ſhould have entertained no worſe opinion of their integrity, if, inſtead of this trimming apology, (wherein they dextrouſly enough fetch back with one hand, what they had appeared to give with the other) they had fairly and honeſtly told the world (what was certainly the truth of the caſe) that their circumſtances required they ſhould have a religious teſt as a cement of their party, and to put them upon the reſpectable footing of *a church*. In the midſt of all their moderation, we have ſeen them above expreſſing their concern, leſt their *proſelytes* ſhould *return to their vomit*. In other paſſages they ſpeak of confeſſions, as *watch-towers*, *enſigns*, and *ſtandards*. On one occaſion they have unwarily dropped this obſervation. "There are ſome things of ſo great "weight and moment, that they cannot be "gainſaid without the extreme hazard of our "ſalvation. Freely to contradict theſe, or *quietly* "*to ſuffer them to be contradicted by others, would* "*be the fartheſt from prudence and charity poſſible.*" What, may we ſuppoſe, would the gentle *Epiſcopius* have done with the *gainſayers* of theſe things, inveſted, as he might poſſibly have been, with a commiſſion from the ſecular arm? All

this moderation and forbearance might, after all, have amounted to no more than what all proteſtant churches *profeſs*; namely, to aſſert the ſovereign authority of the ſcriptures, with a commodious ſaving to themſelves of a concurrent privilege, of providing for the *utility* of their own *well-being*, by an orthodox teſt.

Let no man ſay, that, conſidering the temperate language of the Remonſtrants, a ſurmiſe of this kind cannot be juſtified. In this verbal deference for the authority of the ſcriptures, no church has ever gone farther than our own, nor conſequently left greater latitude for private judgment.

"We receive and embrace" (ſays the church of *England* by the pen of Biſhop *Jewel*) "all the "canonical ſcriptures, both of the Old and New "Teſtament;—we own them to be the heaven-"ly voices by which God hath revealed his will "to us;—in them ONLY can the mind of man "acquieſce; in them all that is neceſſary for our "ſalvation is *abundantly* and *plainly* contained;— "they are the very might and power of God un-"to ſalvation; they are the foundations of the "Apoſtles and Prophets upon which the church "of God is built; they are the moſt certain and "infallible rule, by which the church may be "reduced if ſhe happen to ſtagger, ſlip, or err, "by which *all eccleſiaſtical doctrines ought to be* "*tried*; *no law, no tradition, no cuſtom, is to be re-*"*ceived or continued, if it be contrary to ſcripture*; "no, though St. *Paul* himſelf, or an angel

"from

" from heaven, ſhould come and teach other-
" wiſe [*M*]."

This was once the ſenſe of the church of *England*, whatever authority ſhe may have ſince pretended to, upon other principles. Be this as it may, ſuch of her divines as have aſſerted this authority with the uttermoſt zeal, and in the higheſt terms, have yet, in the ſame breath, extolled her moderation, in laying no greater ſtreſs upon her Confeſſion, than the Remonſtrants themſelves ſeem to contend for.

" Our church," ſays Biſhop *Bull*, " profeſſeth
" not to deliver *all* her articles (*all*, I ſay, for
" ſome of them are coincident with the funda-
" mental points of Chriſtianity) as eſſentials of
" faith, without the belief whereof no man can
" be ſaved, but only propounds them as a body
" of ſafe and pious principles, for the preſerva-
" tion of peace, to be ſubſcribed, and not openly
" contradicted, by her ſons [*N*]."

Nay, even the rigidly-eccleſiaſtical Dr. *Stebbing* allows, that " when we ſpeak of a *right* to deter-
" mine what is the true ſenſe of any article of
" faith, we do not propoſe the explication, given
" in virtue of this *right*, as a rule for the faith or
" conduct of Chriſtians; but only as a rule, ac-
" cording to which they ſhall either be admitted
" or not admitted to officiate as public mini-
" ſters [*O*]."

[*M*] *Contra eas nec legem, nec traditionem, nec conſuetudinem ullam audiendam eſſe*, ſays the Latin *Apol.* ſect. 27.

[*N*] *Vindication of the Church of* England, p. 178.

[*O*] *Rational Enquiry*, p. 36.

'Tis true, the obſcurity of theſe conceſſions is ſuch, that no man can tell what is intended to be given up by them, and what reſerved for the church. In my opinion, they are hardly ſenſe, But this likewiſe is the misfortune of the Remonſtrants, who *oſcillate* the queſtion backwards and forwards, till no mortal can find out what they mean to aſcribe to, or what to detract from, the virtue and merit of a public Confeſſion.

The Remonſtrants, however, have had thus far the better of us; they *believed* their Confeſſion at leaſt when they made this Apology for it. We are driven to make Apologies for, and even to defend ſubſcription to a Confeſſion which many ſubſcribers do not believe; and concerning which *no two thinking men* (according to an ingenious, and right reverend writer) *ever agreed exactly in their opinion, even with regard to any one article of it* [*P*].

Of what curious materials theſe extraordinary Apologies and Defences are framed, we are now proceeding to examine.

[*P*] Dedication to the *Eſſay on Spirit*, p. vi.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

A particular Examination of Biſhop Burnet's *Introduction to the* Expoſition *of the* XXXIX *Articles of the Church of* England.

HItherto our obſervations have been general. Little has been ſaid on the ſubject of eſtabliſhed confeſſions, in which our own church has any greater concern than other proteſtant churches. We ſhall now be a little more particular. And as Biſhop *Burnet* has brought together all the topics of any moment, relating to the ſubſcriptions required of the Engliſh clergy, in a particular diſcourſe prefixed to his Expoſition of our *Articles of Religion*, we ſhall do our venerable mother no wrong, in ſelecting, for our preſent conſideration, the apology of ſo maſterly an advocate.

But, before we proceed to examine his Lordſhip's ſolutions of the ſeveral difficulties which have been ſuppoſed to encumber the caſe of our Engliſh ſubſcriptions, it may be neceſſary to give a little previous attention to the motives and reaſons, which engaged his Lordſhip in this particular work of expounding the *Articles* of our church.

" Some of the Articles," ſays the Biſhop, " ſeemed to lean ſo entirely to *an abſolute predeſtination*, that ſome, upon that account, ſcru-" pled the ſubſcribing them: and others re-" proached

"proached our church with this, that though "our *articles* looked one way, yet our *doctors*, "for the moſt part, went the other way. It was "fit ſuch a point ſhould be well cleared; and it "was in order *to that*, that the late bleſſed Queen "[MARY] did command me to explain thoſe "firſt; which ſhe afterwards enlarged to the "whole thirty-nine [*A*]."

Let us reflect a little on this remarkable circumſtance.

Every one knows that, in the ſenſible and pathetic *Concluſion*, ſubjoined to this excellent Prelate's *Hiſtory of his own Times*, his Lordſhip has not ſcrupled to declare, "that the requiring ſub-"ſcription to the thirty-nine Articles, is a great "impoſition [*B*]." An opinion which was not the reſult of a *late* experience. His Lordſhip had expreſſed himſelf to the ſame purpoſe to the principal men of *Geneva*, with reſpect to their *Conſenſus Doctrinæ*, many years before he could have any view to the circumſtances which gave riſe to his *Expoſition*, and that with ſo much zeal and eloquence, that, according to the writer of his life, (a witneſs worthy of all belief) "it was "through his (the Biſhop's) credit, and the "weight of his character, that the clergy at *Ge-*"*neva* were releaſed from theſe ſubſcriptions, "and only left ſubject to puniſhment or cenſure,

[*A*] Biſhop *Burnet's* Remarks on the Examination of his Expoſition of the Second Article of our Church, p. 2.

[*B*] Folio edition, vol. II. p. 634.

"in

" in caſe of writing or preaching againſt the " eſtabliſhed doctrine [C]."

Theſe being his Lordſhip's uniform ſentiments, in the earlier, as well as the later part of his life, a queſtion is naturally ſuggeſted, why he ſhould write a book, in the mean ſeaſon, with the avowed purpoſe of making men eaſy under their obligations to ſubſcribe? An attempt which could have no other tendency, than to perpetuate the *impoſition* in all ſucceeding times. For the point the Biſhop was to clear being this, " that the articles were capable of " the ſeveral ſenſes of different doctors," the conſequence would be, that *all* might ſafely ſubſcribe them; which would of courſe ſuperſede the neceſſity of aboliſhing ſubſcriptions on the part of the church, let the impoſition be ever ſo grievous to thoſe who could not come into the Biſhop's expedients; and this, as his Lordſhip had good reaſon to know, was no uncommon caſe.

Whether Biſhop *Burnet* conſidered, or indeed whether he ſaw his enterprize in this point of light, cannot be determined. That there were *ſome* conſiderations, which, notwithſtanding the weight of a royal command, made him enter upon this taſk with no little reluctance, appears pretty plainly from the following particulars:

1. In a paragraph juſt now cited from one of his Lordſhip's pamphlets, we are informed that he undertook his *Expoſition*, at the command of

[C] Life, vol. ii. fol. edit. p. 693.

Queen

Queen *Mary*: by whom he likewiſe ſays elſewhere, he was *firſt moved* to write it [*D*]. But in the *preface* to his *Expoſition*, he ſays, "he was "*firſt moved* to undertake that work, by that "great prelate, who then ſat at the helm, [Abp. "*Tillotſon*] and only *determined* in it, by the com-"mand abovementioned *afterwards*."

You may, if you pleaſe, call this a contradiction; to me the truth of the caſe is clearly this, that the great prelate, unable to prevail with his friend *Burnet*, to undertake an affair of that nature at his own motion, applied to the Queen, whoſe influence, added to his own, left the good Biſhop no room to decline the ſervice, however diſagreeable it might be to him.

2. The Queen and the Archbiſhop, dying ſoon after the *Expoſition* was finiſhed, and before it was put to the preſs, the Biſhop, as he informs us himſelf, "being adviſed not to publiſh it, by "ſome of his friends, who concurred with him "in opinion, that ſuch a work would lay him "open to many malicious attacks, kept it by "him, in manuſcript, no leſs than *five years*: at "the end of which interval, he was prevailed on "by the Archbiſhop [*Tenniſon*] and many of his "own order, to delay the publiſhing it no long-"er [*E*]. To which ſollicitations, we may ſuppoſe his Lordſhip to have given way with the leſs difficulty, as he was now at liberty to ſpeak his mind in a *preface*, which, it is highly probable,

[*D*] Hiſt. O. T. vol. ii, pag. 228.
[*E*] Hiſt. O. T. ubi ſupra.

had

had never ſeen the light in the circumſtances we now have it, if the *Queen* and *Tillotſon* had ſurvived the publication of the *Expoſition*. For,

3. In this *preface*, the Biſhop takes particular care to apprize his readers, "that his *Expoſi-* "*tion* was not a work of *authority*; and that in "what he had done, he was, as to the far greater "part, rather an *hiſtorian*, and a *collector* of what "others had written, than an *author* himſelf." But what is ſtill more, he there freely declares, the ſlender opinion he had of the effect of ſuch expedients as he had ſuggeſted in his *introduction*. "The ſettling on ſome equivocal formula- "ries," ſays his Lordſhip, "will never lay the "contention that has ariſen, concerning the chief "points in difference between the Lutherans and "the Calviniſts *." An obſervation which will equally hold good, with reſpect to equivocal ſenſes put upon more poſitive and dogmatical formularies. In neither caſe are the men of different ſyſtems "left free, as the Biſhop thinks "they ſhould be, to adhere to their own opi- "nions:" and ſo long as they are not, they will be for ever ſtruggling to break looſe. No peace will enſue.

Theſe ſentiments, I humbly apprehend, had not appeared where we now find them, if the *Expoſition* had been publiſhed as ſoon as it was finiſhed. The right reverend author would moſt probably have ſuppreſſed them, in mere tender-

* See Bayle's *Dict.* Musculus, Rem. [G]

neſs to the good Archbiſhop, whoſe notions concerning theſe *healing meaſures*, and *middle* ways, were very different from thoſe of Biſhop *Burnet*. His Grace's temper was mild and cautious, even to the borders of timidity. His leading object was to keep church-matters in peace. What he thought of ſubſcriptions is not very clear. Poſſibly he might think they were unwarrantable impoſitions, and wiſh, at the bottom, to be *well rid of* them [*F*]. But the virulence of the oppoſition to a propoſed *review* of the liturgy in 1689, had taught him caution with reſpect to ſuch attempts. His Grace might, and certainly did, wiſh to procure more liberty for himſelf and all honeſt men, to write and ſpeak their ſentiments freely. But the *articles* ſtood in the way, an immoveable barrier to the church,—a ſort of a *guard-houſe*, to which the centinels of the hierarchy were for ever dragging poor culprits, who

[*F*] And yet Dr. *Birch*, in his *Life* of this eminent prelate, hath preſerved an anecdote, by no means favourable to this ſurmiſe. I mean that ſtrange equivalent propoſed by his Grace, in lieu of the common form of ſubſcription. *viz: We do ſubmit to the doctrine, diſcipline, and worſhip of the Church of England, as it* SHALL BE *eſtabliſhed by law, and promiſe to teach and practiſe accordingly.* This would be bowing our necks to the yoke with a witneſs. What we ſubſcribe to now, is before us; and in a condition to be examined before hand. What SHALL BE eſtabliſhed hereafter, we know not. By ſuch a ſubſcription, a man might oblige himſelf to teach and practiſe popery it ſelf: "The Church of *England*," ſaid Biſhop *Burnet* once in a debate, "is an equivocal expreſſion; and if popery ſhould "prevail, it would be called the Church of *England* ſtill." See *Vox Cleri*, pag. 68. *Birch*, Life of *Tillotſon*, 8vo. p. 183.

had

had ſtrayed ever ſo little beyond the verge of the court. All that could be done, as the caſe then ſtood, was to *expound* theſe articles ſo, that men of different opinions might ſubſcribe them; and by that means, be brought to bear with each other in controvertible points, and to debate matters freely, without incurring ſuſpicions or reproaches of hereſy or prevarication. Into this ſervice, I preſume, was the Biſhop of *Salisbury* preſſed by his Grace of *Canterbury*; and with whatever reluctance he might undertake it, we may be ſure he would never mortify his friend by publicly declaring, as he does in this *preface*, the contemptible opinion he had of ſuch expedients.

4. There is one circumſtance farther to be obſerved on this ſubject, which is well worth our notice. Biſhop *Burnet* was under a greater difficulty with reſpect to ſuch an undertaking, than moſt men. The readieſt way to have anſwered *Tillotſon's* purpoſe, would have been to conſider and expound this articular ſyſtem ſo, that ſubſcription to it might ſtand for no more than a peaceable acquieſcence, or, at moſt, an engagement not openly to contradict it. But unluckily for the preſent expounder, he had long before, declared in a celebrated work, "that there ap-
"peared no reaſon for this conceit, no ſuch
"thing [as their being intended only for ar-
"ticles of peace] being declared when the ar-
"ticles were firſt ſet out; inſomuch, that they
"who ſubſcribed them *then*, did either believe
"them

"them to be true, or elſe they did groſsly pre-
"varicate [G]."

It is, indeed, highly probable, that his Lordſhip never altered his opinion in this matter. For even when his *Expoſition* was about to be publiſhed, Biſhop *Williams* ſtrongly recommended, that they might be conſidered only as *articles of peace*. Upon which the late Judge *Burnet*, mentioning this incident in his father's life, obſerves, "that there might, perhaps, be reaſon to wiſh "that they had only been impoſed as ſuch, but "there was nothing in our conſtitution to war-"rant an expoſitor in giving that ſenſe to "them." His father was plainly in the ſame ſentiments when he ſet out his *Expoſition*; which makes it the more extraordinary, that ſome modern writers ſhould ſtill contend for this *pacific* ſenſe of ſubſcription, when two ſuch able judges, the one of the original intention of the Church, the other of the point of Law, have ſo clearly and poſitively determined againſt them.

Whether Biſhop *Burnet* would have given more room to ſubſcribers in his *Expoſition*, if that paſſage in his *Hiſtory of the Reformation* had been out of the way, it would even be impertinent to gueſs. Had Biſhop *Williams* been the *expoſitor*, he would, it is likely, have carried ſubſcriptions no higher than an obligation to *acquieſce* in the doctrine of our articles; upon a preſumption, poſſibly, that the preſent generation, if they could agree upon it, need not be bound by

[G] Hiſt. Reformat. vol. ii. p. 169.

the

the *original* intention of the church or the compilers. Sir *Thomas Burnet*, however, we ſee, carries us back to our *conſtitution*; and that implies, that what was *once* the intention of the church in this matter, muſt be ſtill her intention: and ſo, undoubtedly, thought the Biſhop his father. And as his Lordſhip had all along ſeen things in this light, it is amazing to me, that the ſenſe he expreſſed of the firſt ſubſcriptions, in his Hiſtory of the Reformation, ſhould not ſuggeſt to him, that he could no more give the ſubſcribers of the preſent age the privilege of availing themſelves of different *grammatical* ſenſes, than he could allow them to conſider the articles, as articles of peace.

His Lordſhip hath ſaid in plain terms, "that "they who ſubſcribed the articles when they "were firſt ſet out, did either believe them to be "true, or elſe they did groſsly prevaricate." Now, if they believed them to be true, they certainly believed them to be true in *one preciſe uniform ſenſe*, that is to ſay, in a ſenſe *excluſive* of all *diverſity of opinion*, as the title of the articles plainly imports. And if ſo, what is there in our conſtitution to warrant an expoſitor to allow men to ſubſcribe in *different* ſenſes? If the firſt ſubſcribers would have prevaricated in ſo doing, the original intention of the compilers will fix the ſame reproach upon *all* ſubſcribers who deviate from the church's ſenſe to this hour.

But whether we are right in ſuppoſing the good Biſhop to have undertaken this taſk againſt

the grain or not, we have good reaſon to believe, that his ſucceſs did not yield him the higheſt ſatisfaction in the latter end of his life. His diſcontent will appear by and by, in a citation from a pamphlet he was obliged to write in defence of his *Expoſition*, immediately after it was publiſhed; and in his golden legacy, at the end of his laſt hiſtory, he ſcruples not to ſay, "that the "greater part of the clergy ſubſcribe the articles "without ever examining them, and others do it "becauſe they *muſt* do it, tho' they can hardly "ſatisfy their conſciences about ſome things in "them." Is not this ſaying, that all his pains in expounding the articles, and all his expedients to temper the caſe of ſubſcription to all taſtes and complexions, had been abſolutely thrown away; and that ſubſcription, after all the colours that can be put upon it, is no better than an unwarrantable impoſition?

I cannot leave this view of the connexion between theſe two prelates *Tillotſon* and *Burnet*, without a ſhort reflexion on theſe *trimming* methods in matters of religion. When were they ever known to ſucceed? And where were they ever known to conciliate the mind of any one of thoſe unreaſonable zealots, to whoſe humour they were accommodated? We, of this generation, have lived to ſee how greatly Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* was miſtaken, in thinking to win over the high churchmen of thoſe days, by his healing expedients. His gentle, lenitive ſpirit, was to their bigotry, what oil is to the fire. Biſhop

Burnet's

Burnet's friendſhip for the Archbiſhop carried him into theſe meaſures, contrary to his natural bent, and in mere complaiſance to the Archbiſhop's apprehenſions of a ſtorm, which he dreaded above all other things. And I remember to have heard ſome old men rejoice, that *Burnet* was kept down by *Tillotſon's* influence, from puſhing the reformation of the church to an extremity that might have endangered the government itſelf. Some of theſe men, however, might have remembered, that when the Archbiſhop was no longer at hand to temper *Burnet's* impetuoſity, the latter had prudence ſufficient to balance his courage, and to keep him from attempting, what he had ſenſe enough to perceive was impracticable. But after all, what has been the conſequence of *Tillotſon's* gentleneſs, and *Burnet's* complaiſance for the times? even this; theſe two eminent lights of the Engliſh Church, could not have been more oppoſed while they lived, or more abuſed and vilified ſince they died, had they firmly and vigorouſly promoted, at all adventures, that reformation in the church of *England*, which, they were both of them deeply conſcious, ſhe very much wanted [*I*].

[*I*] Beſides the ſtaler inſtances of the outrageous treatment theſe two eminent prelates have met with in and nearer their own times, how implacably the malice of ſome men purſues them even to the preſent moment, may be ſeen in an abuſive and ſcandalous character given of Biſhop *Burnet*, in a late thing called, *Obſervations upon* Tacitus; and in ſome jacobite *Remarks* on the Life of Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, by Dr. *Birch*.

But after all, if what Biſhop *Burnet* has offered under all theſe diſadvantages, will not juſtify the church of *England* in requiring ſubſcription to the 39 articles, or leave room for the ſincerity of thoſe doctors, who ſeem to go one way, while the articles look another, we may venture to conclude, without any juſt imputation of temerity, that this ſervice will hardly be more effectually performed by men of another ſtamp, who may probably engage in it with more alacrity, and leſs circumſpection. What the good biſhop has ſaid on this behalf, we now proceed to conſider.

His Lordſhip begins with ſtating the ſeeming impropriety " of making ſuch a collection of te-" nets, the ſtandard of the doctrine of a Church, " that, according to his Lordſhip, is deſervedly " valued by reaſon of her moderation. This, " ſays the biſhop, ſeems to be a departing from " the ſimplicity of the firſt ages, which yet we " ſet up for a pattern [*K*]."

This objected impropriety (which, by the way, his Lordſhip exceedingly ſtrengthens and illuſtrates, by an induction of particulars) he rather endeavours to palliate and excuſe, or, as he terms it, *explain*, than to deny or confute. He gives us an hiſtorical recital of the practice of former times, to ſhew that our church acts after a precedent of long ſtanding. To this no other anſwer is neceſſary, than that this was the practice of times, which were not remarkable either for

[*K*] Introduction, p. 1.

their

their *moderation* or *ſimplicity*, and of whoſe example the church of *England* cannot avail herſelf, conſiſtently with her pretenſions to theſe two amiable qualities [*L*].

But it ſeems this practice was originally the practice of the apoſtles: a conſideration, which will not only authorize our imitation, but ſtrongly imply the utility and edification of the thing itſelf.

"There was a form," ſays his Lordſhip, "ſettled very early in moſt churches. This St. "*Paul*, in one place calls, *The form of doctrine that* "*was delivered*, in another place, *The form of ſound* "*words*, which thoſe, who were fixed by the apoſtles in particular churches, had received from "them. Theſe words of his do import a *ſtandard* or *fixed formulary*, by which all doctrines "were to be examined [*M*]." The paſſages here referred to, are, *Rom.* vi. 17.—1 *Tim.* iv. 6. to which are added in the margin, 1 *Tim.* vi. 3.—2 *Tim.* i. 13. and the Greek words in theſe ſeveral paſſages which are ſuppoſed to ſignify this *ſtandard* or *fixed formulary*, run thus—Τυπος διδαχης—Ὑποτυπωσις ὑγιαινοντων λογων—Λογοι πιστεως, και καλης διδασκαλιας—Ὑγιαινοντες λογοι, οἱ τε Κυριε ἡμων Ιησε Χριστε, και ἡ καθ' ευσεβειαν διδασκαλια.

[*L*] To illuſtrate this truth, Dr. *Moſheim's Compendious View* of *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, may be conſulted, from the times of *Conſtantine* downwards: and with greater advantage, in Dr. *Maclaine's* Engliſh tranſlation, lately publiſhed.

[*M*] Introd. p. 2.

Now, when a capable and unprejudiced reader conſiders the variety of expreſſion in theſe ſeveral paſſages, he will probably be inclined to think, that a *fixed formulary* of doctrine is the laſt thing a plain man would look for in them. A *fixed formulary*, one would think, ſhould have a *fixed title*. Nor is it at all probable, that one and the ſame form of words, ſhould be deſcribed in terms, which may denote an hundred different forms.

To enter into a juſt criticiſm on theſe expreſſions, would be tedious and unneceſſary. Suffice it to obſerve, after very competent judges, that τυπος διδαχης, and ὑποτυπωσις ὑγιαινοντων λογων, appear to refer rather to the *exemplification* of the Chriſtian doctrine in the *practice* of pious believers, than to any *form of words*. The *doctrine* is *one* thing, and the *type* of the doctrine, *another*. The doctrine is, and muſt be expreſſed by, and conſequently contained in, *ſome* form of words. But the *type* of that *form*, muſt be ſomething different from the form it ſelf; and the general acceptation of the word τυπος, points out the *practical exemplification* of the doctrine, to be the thing here intended. The text, *Rom.* vi. 17. is, it muſt be owned, obſcure and difficult, but without giving this ſenſe to the words τυπος διδαχης, it is abſolutely unintelligible [*N*]. And

[*N*] See *Grotius* and *Bengelius's* Gnomon upon the place. Τυπος. Typus, veſtigium, figura, exemplar, forma. *Hen. Stephen.* Acts xxiii. 25. τυπος is the *literal copy* of *Lyſias's* epiſtle to *Felix*, not the ſum or abridgment of it.

whatever

whatever is the ſignification of τυπος here, muſt be the meaning of ὑποτυπωσις, 2 *Tim.* i. 13 [O].

Again, the literal Engliſh of ὑγιαινουσες λογοι, is *healing* or *ſalutary words*; that is, the words of ſalvation or eternal life. Our tranſlators have rendered the Greek participle by the equivocal words, *ſound* and *wholeſome*, which ſignified, I ſuppoſe, in their ideas, the ſame with *orthodox*.

If you aſk where theſe *healing words* are to be found? I anſwer, in the ſcriptures, ſometimes, perhaps, abridged and comprehended in ſome ſhort ſummaries, which occur in *Paul's* epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus*. But theſe are evidently not the *fixed formularies* his Lordſhip means. As the certain conſequence of that muſt have been, that no man, or body of men whatſoever, could have had the leaſt authority to add to them, or inlarge them in any future time.

And if any other *ſtandard* or *formulary* is meant, it then comes to our turn to aſk the que-

[O] The word is but once more to be found in the New Teſtament, *viz.* 1 *Tim.* i. 16. Where the apoſtle ſays, *he found* mercy—προς ὑποτυπωσιν των μελλοντων πιστευειν, &c. for *a pattern*; which is the ſame thing as an *example* of the doctrine of pardon and mercy, thro' Chriſt. In what ſenſe the word τυπος was afterwards uſed, may be ſeen in *Mills's* tranſlation of *Bruys's* Hiſt. of the Popes, vol. i. p. 428. Where an inſtrument, or edict of the Emperor *Conſtans*, for the pacification of the diſputes concerning the two Wills of Chriſt, is called the *Type*. Which inſtrument contained no formulary of doctrine, but only enjoined that the parties at variance ſhould abide by the ſcriptures, the five œcumenical councils, and the plain and ſimple paſſages of the fathers.

ſtion. Where is it to be found? What is become of it? For that it ſhould be loſt, or drop into utter oblivion, if it once had a real exiſtence, is wholly incredible.

In anſwer to this demand, the Biſhop gives us to underſtand, "that, by a *fixed formulary*, he "does not mean *one preciſe* and invariable form "of words, which he thinks it improbable the "apoſtles ſhould leave behind them. For his "Lordſhip obſerves, that the firſt apologiſts for "Chriſtianity, when they deliver a ſhort abſtract "of the Chriſtian faith, do all vary from one "another, both as to the order, and as to the "words themſelves. Whence he thinks it more "probable, that they received theſe ſhort ab-"ſtracts from the apoſtles themſelves, with ſome "variation."

But ſurely, the moment you admit of *variations*, not only the *idea* of a *fixed formulary*, but even the *uſe* of *any* formulary, as a *ſtandard* or *teſt* of *all* doctrines, immediately vaniſhes away. There muſt be left, in ſuch *varying* formularies, room for doubtful and precarious judgments: and the ſcriptures alone, in all ſuch caſes, muſt be the *dernier reſort*. And if ſo, why might they not as well have been admitted to decide in the firſt inſtance?

But to come nearer the caſe in hand. Do any of theſe apologiſts pretend to have received any of theſe ſhort abſtracts from the apoſtles themſelves? or does it appear among all the variety of creeds which theſe primitive fathers have exhibited,

exhibited, that any one of them came immediately from the apoſtles? Mr. *Whiſton*, who, perhaps, had made as exact a ſcrutiny into matters of this nature as any man living or dead, and who was as likely to adopt any thing for apoſtolic, which had the leaſt pretence to ſo honourable an origin, frankly confeſſes, in one of his books, that "he finds no trace of an apoſtolical "baptiſmal creed in the writings of the fathers, "for *above* three centuries, though he makes no "doubt, but there was *all along* ſuch a creed "among them, notwithſtanding [*P*]."

I cite Mr. *Whiſton* as a witneſs to a fact, but lay no ſtreſs upon his opinion; nor, indeed, does it deſerve the leaſt regard, after he has told us, "that in the fourth century, many doubtful and "exceptionable creeds were publicly uſed in the "church, and did *then* exceedingly diſturb and "confound chriſtianity." That is to ſay, *at*, or immediately *after*, *the very time*, when he makes no doubt but they had ſuch an authentic baptiſmal creed among them.

But till ſome of theſe apoſtolic formularies are brought to light, what his Lordſhip ſays of a *depoſitum*, lodged in the hands of a biſhop, &c. muſt paſs only for an inference from a *poſtulatum*, which, for many good reaſons, and ſuch, particularly, as riſe from our ſcripture-accounts of the manner in which the apoſtles preached and propagated the goſpel, cannot be granted. And indeed, upon his Lordſhip's ſuppoſition, that the

[*P*] Reply to Dr. *Allix's* Remarks, p. 18.

apoſtles

apoſtles, or their companions, delivered theſe formularies of faith as *depoſits*, with ſuch variations as the caſes and ſituations of particular churches demanded, it is next to impoſſible they ſhould all have periſhed ſo abſolutely, that no remains of them are to be diſcovered to this hour.

But it ſeems, there is a way of accounting for this ſtate of utter oblivion, into which theſe primitive formularies are fallen, very conſiſtent with the ſuppoſition of their real exiſtence for ſeveral centuries. We are told that theſe formularies contained a κρυφιον δογμα, a *ſecret doctrine*, ſeldom, if ever, committed to writing; the uſe of which was, to ſecure the chriſtian brotherhood (by way of a teſt or teſſera of true diſcipleſhip) from being impoſed upon by the inſidious and diſſembled pretences of pagans and heretics. And to this *ſecret doctrine*, St. *John* is ſuppoſed to allude, where he ſays, 2 Epiſt. v. 10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your houſe, neither bid him God ſpeed.*

Some divines are extremely ingenious in diſcovering what the ſacred writers *allude* to, when they allude to nothing but what is plainly *expreſſed* in the context. Look back to verſe the 7th, and carry the connection of the Apoſtle's diſcourſe along with you to this 10th verſe, and you will plainly perceive the *doctrine* mentioned in that verſe to be this propoſition, *Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh:* which ſome perſons, and thoſe perhaps pretending to be *Chriſtians*, then denied.

denied *. If you refer the words, *this doctrine*, no farther back than to the foregoing verſe, and ſuppoſe *the doctrine of Chriſt*, there mentioned, to be a *ſecret* formulary of doctrine, concealed among the ſincere and faithful Chriſtians for the purpoſes above mentioned, the conſequence will be, that though a brother ſhould confeſs that *Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh*, and profeſs his belief of every goſpel-truth, which is implied in, or depends upon, that confeſſion, you *were not to receive him into your houſe*, nor *bid him God ſpeed*, unleſs he brought this ſecret ſymbolical doctrine, which perhaps he might never have heard of. And how oppoſite that would be to the ſpirit of the goſpel, needs no particular proof.

What other arguments or evidences there may be to ſupport this fancy, I have not examined. I freely own it would mortify me greatly to find ſuch a practice fixed upon the primitive church, by any ſort of evidence, which ſhould fairly derive it from the Apoſtles [*P*]. Nothing could

* See *Chillingworth's* Letter to *Lewgar*. Life by Deſmaizeaux, p. 32. His words are theſe: "If you think me one "of thoſe to whom St. *John* forbids you to ſay *God ſave you*, "then you are to think and prove me one of thoſe deceivers "which deny Jeſus Chriſt to be *come in the fleſh*."

[*P*] I have been informed, that the late learned Dr. *John Colbatch*, profeſſor of *caſuiſtical divinity* in the univerſity of *Cambridge*, hath left behind him a manuſcript wherein the reality of a κρυφιον δογμα among the ancient Chriſtians, is clearly proved. I wiſh ſuch manuſcript were printed. For, though I think it impoſſible that a ſecret of this kind, if ever it had any ſubſtantial foundation, ſhould not tranſpire before the eighteenth century; yet ſuch an attempt from ſo learned a

be

be more inconſiſtent with the nature and circumſtances of their commiſſion, or the tenour, ſpirit, and deſign of the goſpel in general. Our Saviour told his Apoſtles, that *what had been whiſpered in the ear* (the truths that had been communicated to them only) *ſhould by them be proclaimed upon the houſe-tops* [Q]. St. *Paul* puts his being *pure from the blood of all men*, upon this, that *he had not ſhunned to declare* to the churches where he preached, *the whole counſel of God* [R]: and appeals to his openneſs, ſimplicity, and ſincerity, on many other occaſions. In the ſame ſenſe of their duty, the whole college join in prayer to God, that they may be enabled *to ſpeak the word with all boldneſs*: μετα πασης παρρησιας, with all freedom; *ſine involucris*, ſays *Grotius* [S]. And yet, it ſeems, they had among them a *ſecret doctrine*, reſerved to be communicated only to adepts, to the *initiated*, and ſuch as might be confided in: which indeed would have been reducing chriſtianity to a paltry ſect, and bringing in di-

perſon as Dr. *Colbatch*, would certainly furniſh curioſities enow to recompence the pains of reading his book, however ſhort and unſatisfied it might leave us with reſpect to the main point. A caſuiſtical divine is, by his profeſſion, a dealer in cryptics. The plain open truths of the New Teſtament will not agree with certain ſqueamiſh conſciences. Few people, I apprehend, carry their ſcruples to caſuiſts, without having a ſuſpicion that the goſpel is againſt them. The doctor, to oblige, or to ſatisfy ſuch patients, muſt fetch his drugs from the hidden wiſdom of the Fathers and Schoolmen.

[Q] *Luke* xii. 3. compare *Matth.* x. 27.

[R] *Acts* xx. 26, 27.

[S] *Acts* iv. 29.

ſtinctions, which could not but have diſguſted new converts, many of whom, no doubt, had taken offence at the excluſive rites and myſteries in the religions they had profeſſed, and would, on that very account, be rather inclined to embrace an inſtitution where every thing was openly declared, and freely communicated.

What indeed might happen in ſome Chriſtian ſocieties, and perhaps in no long time after the demiſe of the Apoſtles, I would not undertake to ſay. As little as we know of thoſe early times, we have ſufficient evidence of their widely deviating from the ſimplicity of the goſpel; and all I am concerned for is to ſhew, that the Apoſtles ſet them no ſuch examples.

Biſhop *Burnet* indeed makes no expreſs mention of this *ſecret doctrine*; and whether he meant any thing of that ſort, by the *depoſitum* lodged in the hands of the Biſhop, is uncertain. But it is plain, without ſome ſuch ſuppoſition, the loſs of an apoſtolical formulary of faith, muſt be utterly unaccountable; as a *depoſitum*, in any other circumſtances, muſt have been preſerved and perpetuated, with the ſame care and reſpect as the ſcriptures themſelves.

But, admitting that there had been ſuch a formulary of apoſtolical authority, and that ſome of thoſe creeds, which the earlier Fathers have left us, were framed after the model of it; we ſhould certainly expect a good account, by what authority thoſe large additions were made, which appear in creeds and confeſſions of a later date; the

the rather as we have good reaſon to believe, that the ſhorteſt of the ancient creeds now remaining came the neareſt to the apoſtolic model, in courſe of time, as well as in their contents.

To this the good Biſhop anſwers no otherwiſe, than by giving us a detail of thoſe growing hereſies, which occaſioned ſuch enlargements. He does not venture to ſay, that ſuch enlargements were properly grounded upon, or duly authorized by ſuch occaſions. He had too honeſt a heart, and too diſcerning a head, to juſtify ſuch practices at all events, as ſome others, both before him and after him, have done. On the contrary, he ſays, "it had been an invaluable bleſſing, if the "Chriſtian religion had been kept in its firſt "ſimplicity." It is not clear, to me at leaſt, that he thought even the imputation of idolatry, occaſioned by the worſhip of the Son, a ſufficient reaſon for adding the words, *of the ſame ſubſtance with the Father*, to the creeds of the Chriſtian churches. He once more, however, ſays, "it "had been a great bleſſing to the church, if a "ſtop had been put here." After which, it could hardly be expected, that his Lordſhip ſhould enter upon a formal defence of creeds and confeſſions, ſuch as they have appeared in modern churches. Decently, therefore, and tenderly does the good man cloſe this part of his ſubject, by ſaying, "In ſtating the doctrines of this church "ſo copiouſly, our Reformers followed a method "that had been uſed in a courſe of many ages."

And

And now, the vindication of the church of *England* being put upon this footing, it became neceſſary to ſpecify the ſubſiſting or the growing hereſies, which would account for the *copious* form of doctrine eſtabliſhed in our own church.

For this purpoſe, his Lordſhip mentions two particular circumſtances in thoſe times, to which it became neceſſary our Reformers ſhould pay a particular regard.

The firſt of theſe circumſtances was, "that "when the ſcriptures were firſt put into men's "hands at the Reformation, as a rule of faith, "many ſtrange conceits were pretended to be "derived from them, which gave riſe to ſeveral "impious and extravagant ſects. Whence the "Papiſts took occaſion to calumniate the Refor-"mation, as if theſe ſectaries ſpoke out, what all "Proteſtants thought, — and that all ſects were "the natural conſequences of the Reformation, "and of ſhaking off the doctrine of the infallibi-"lity of the church. So that, to ſtop theſe ca-"lumnies, it became neceſſary for particular "churches, and for our own among the reſt, to "publiſh confeſſions of their faith, both for the "inſtruction of their own members, and for co-"vering them from the ſlanders of their adver-"ſaries."

Concerning this method of obviating calumnies by confeſſions, ſomething has been ſaid already in a foregoing chapter. But however, as the caſe of the church of *England* was ſomewhat different from that of the Remonſtrants, it may

may not be improper to consider this plea, in reference to our *English* Reformers.

And here it must be owned, Bishop *Burnet* has, with great justice and propriety, drawn a parallel between the slanders cast upon the Protestants by the Papists, and the calumnies thrown at the first Christians by the Jews and Pagans. Popery, at the time of the Reformation, was a mixture of Judaical rites and traditions, and of Pagan idolatry and superstition. The Reformation may be called the resurrection of the Christian religion, and would naturally be attended with all the consequences of the first preaching and spreading of the gospel. Here then the Reformers had a precedent before them; and should have done what the Apostles did in the same situation. The Apostles were slandered as having taught, that *men might do evil, that good might come.* The doctrine of *free grace* was the immediate occasion of this calumny, which, for the honour and credit of Christianity, demanded the most speedy and effectual refutation. What course did the Apostles take in this exigency? Did they frame a new creed or confession, or insert into an old one a new article, importing, "that no man should do evil, for the sake of "procuring the greatest imaginable good?" No, they left the calumny to be confronted by the gospel-history, and the tenor of their own writings and conversation, and gave themselves no farther trouble about it.

In

In like manner, had the Reformers held up the Bible, and ſaid, "Here is our rule of "faith and manners, and by this only we deſire "to have our doctrine and practice examined;" and had they, as the Apoſtles did, *acted in conformity to that declaration*, they muſt for ever have ſilenced every cavil, and every ſlander, which the wit of man could have deviſed againſt them.

But they were governed by other precedents, and had, no doubt, as much liberty, and equal right to publiſh apologies and declarations of their faith, as other churches. This was done on the behalf of the church of *England* by Biſhop *Jewel*, and that ſo much to the ſatisfaction of the church, that his book paſſed a long time for the authentic ſtandard of its doctrine. But, whom did it ſatisfy or convince, except the Engliſh Proteſtants? and what peace did it procure for *them?* Let the bulky volume of controverſy teſtify (which is yet to be found in many of our churches) ſpun out of the bowels of this petty *Apology*, no bigger, at its firſt appearance, than a three-penny pamphlet.

I hope, however, I ſhall not be thought to derogate from our thirty-nine articles, if I ſay that this *Apology* did its work, whatever it was, as well as that more authentic ſyſtem; and, what is more, did it without being ſubſcribed, or adopted as a teſt, either of miniſterial or lay-communion. And, had the Reformers contented themſelves with this method of defence, they might have purſued it without any complaint, and

without any ill conſequence to their own friends. The fault we find with them is not for declaring their faith, or confuting the calumnies of the adverſary; but ſetting up theſe declarations and defences, as teſts of orthodoxy; and binding them upon the conſciences of thoſe, who had as much right to diſſent from *them*, as they had to diſſent from popery: and from this charge, what Biſhop *Burnet* hath pleaded on their behalf, will not acquit them.

That a variety of ſects aroſe out of the Reformation, was a matter of fact, which can hardly be conſidered in the light of a calumny. It neither could nor ought to have been denied. It was the natural effect of great numbers emancipated from the fetters of Rome, and reſtored to the exerciſe of their private judgment. If any of theſe ſects were impious or extravagant in their tenets, might not ſome of this be owing to the intolerant ſpirit of ſome of the Reformers themſelves? who, by narrowing the bottom of Chriſtian communion, and eſtabliſhing excluſive creeds and confeſſions, very probably provoked ſome warm ſpirits to thoſe exceſſes, who diſdained to have a new yoke laid upon them, by thoſe very men who had ſo lately ſhaken off that of popery. To ſay that theſe impious ſectaries ſpoke out what all Proteſtants thought, was ſo ridiculous and abſurd, that it deſerved no other anſwer, but an appeal to the *actual ſeparation* of one ſort from another [Q].

[Q] *Seckendorf* indeed ſpeaks of "a ſect of fanatics which "ſpread in the *Low Countries*, before *Luther* began to attack

On

On the other hand, ſuch ſects as differed from each other, and kept within the bounds of ſobriety and order, as they manifeſtly aroſe out of the Reformation, ſo were they all upon an equal footing of authority. They might, if they pleaſed, reprobate each other in their ſeveral confeſſions, but they could not ſay in thoſe confeſſions, that a variety of ſects did not exiſt, or that ſuch a variety ever would have exiſted, if the whole Chriſtian world had continued to acknowledge the infallibility of the Roman church. The proper defence againſt ſuch calumnies, was to ſay, as ſome of the cooler and more ſenſible Reformers did ſay, that, after ſo long a night of ignorance, and dearth of literature, it was no wonder that men ſhould fall upon different explanations of ſcriptures, which had been ſo little ſtudied, and ſo carefully ſecreted from thoſe who were inclined

" popery, and was therefore the offſpring of popery, not of " Lutheraniſm. They kept themſelves," he tells us, " from " inquiry and puniſhment, in that they conformed, by a wic- " ked diſſimulation, to the external rites of the eſtabliſhed " worſhip, with an equal, and ſometimes a greater, affectation " of ſanctity, than others. Some of theſe had a propenſity to " atheiſm, or libertiniſm; and the people afterwards aſpiring " to evangelical liberty, theſe fanatics began, under this pre- " tence, to inſinuate their profane opinions to them, with more " aſſurance." *Hiſt. Luth.* b. ii. p. 30. After which, he cites a paſſage, wherein *Luther* takes notice of them, and accounts for their being ſo ſtill and quiet under popery, and ſo troubleſome after the reformation began, from the caſe in the parable of *the ſtrong man armed*, &c. *Luke* xi. 21.—But, without doubt, there was a variety of ſects, which owed their riſe to the progreſs of the reformation, without having any connexion with theſe papiſtical fanatics.

to ſtudy them; and had even been degraded to the level of the decretal epiſtles in point of importance and authority [*R*].

[*R*] It is a queſtion of ſome difficulty, when the church of *Rome* began to derogate from the authority of the ſcriptures, and to raiſe their traditions to an equality with them? It is generally ſuppoſed that Pope *Nicholas* ordained, that the decretal epiſtles of the Popes ſhould be of the ſame authority as the ſcriptures, about the year 855. But the true caſe was this: *Nicholas* had ſaid that the decretals of his predeceſſors ought to conclude ſome French Biſhops, who refuſed to appeal to the Roman ſee, upon a point controverted and decided among themſelves. The Biſhops alledged, that thoſe decretals were no part of the canon law. *Nicholas* replied, that if this was a good reaſon for rejecting the decretals, it would afford a pretence for rejecting the Old and New Teſtament; for that theſe were not to be found in the code of the canon. *Du Pleſſis*, Myſt. Iniq. *Progreſſ.* 31.——Doubtleſs the argument is a miſerable one; but, however, is far from implying, much more from aſſerting, that the decretals were of equal authority with the ſcriptures. *Du Pleſſis* indeed ſays, that Pope *Agatho* had, 170 years before, pronounced openly, "that all decrees made by "the ſee apoſtolic, ought to be received as if they had proceeded "from St. *Peter's* own mouth." But, as this doctrine had gained no canonical authority in the pontificate of *Nicholas*, it ought not ſo early to be put to the account of the church. Nor do I indeed find any formal decree to ſuch effect till the year 1415, when the council of *Conſtance*, in the condemnation of the 38th article of *Wycliffe's* hereſy, ordained, "that ſuch "of the *decretal epiſtles*, as ſhould be found, upon examination, "to be rightly aſcribed to the Popes whoſe names they bore, "ſhould be of equal authority with the epiſtles of the Apo-"ſtles." *L'Enfant's* Hiſt. Counc. of *Conſtance*, vol. I. p. 229. The qualifying clauſe of *examination* ſhews that they were not even then without juſt ſuſpicions that the collections of *Ivo* of *Chartres*, *Gratian*, and others, were not wholly authentic. From this period, *the ſufficiency of the ſcriptures alone to ſalvation*, became a formal hereſy, as appears by the twelfth of the interrogatories exhibited to *Lambert* in *Fox's* Martyrology in the year

The

Thee other circumſtance which, according to Biſhop *Burnet*, made a copious confeſſion more

1538. Hitherto, however, the ſcriptures ſtood upon even ground with papal conſtitutions; and the inconſiſtencies between them were kept ſufficiently out of ſight by depriving the people of the ordinary means of ſtudying the ſacred oracles, and entertaining them only with the ignorant and myſtical comments of the monks upon them. When this would no longer paſs upon mankind, it then became neceſſary to degrade the ſcriptures to an inferior claſs. *Eraſmus*, in that colloquy which is intituled Ιχθυοφαγια, canvaſſes the point, thus. LANIO: *Petrus igitur habuit autoritatem condendi novas leges?* SALSAMENTARIUS: *Habuit.* LAN. *Habuit et Paulus, cum cæteris apoſtolis?* SALS. *Habuerunt in ſuis quiſque eccleſiis, a Petro, ſeu Chriſto commiſſis.* LAN. *Et Petri ſucceſſoribus par eſt poteſtas cum ipſo Petro?* SALS. *Quidni?* LAN. *Tantundem igitur honoris debetur reſcripto Romani pontificis, quantum epiſtolis Petri: et tantundem conſtitutionibus epiſcoporum, quantum epiſtolis Pauli?* SALS. *Equidem arbitror etiam* amplius *deberi, ſi præcipiant et legem ferant cum autoritate.* LAN. *Sed faſue eſt dubitare, an Petrus et Paulus ſcripſerint afflatu divini Spiritus?* SALS. *Imo hæreticus ſit qui dubitet.* LAN. *Idem cenſes de reſcriptis et conſtitutionibus pontificum et epiſcoporum?* SALS. *De pontifice cenſeo, de epiſcopis ambigo, niſi quod pium eſt, de nullo perperam ſuſpicari, ni res ipſa palam clamitet.* That *Eraſmus* would be underſtood to give his own ſenſe in the perſon of the *fiſhmonger*, is undeniable. With what ſincerity, is another matter. This we may depend upon, that he ſpeaks the orthodox ſentiments of the church, and gives us to underſtand, at leaſt, upon what conſiderations the precedence was given to the papal reſcripts above the epiſtles of *Peter* and *Paul*. Probably the condition, *ſi præcipiant et legem ferant cum autoritate*, might be his own. But who ſees not how idle it is to apply any ſuch limitation to thoſe decrees, which are *confeſſedly* written by divine inſpiration, as *Eraſmus* pretends here to think the pontifical decrees were? This colloquy is perhaps one of the ſevereſt ſatires extant againſt the ſuperſtitions of popery. But whence had theſe ſuperſtitions their riſe or their authority? Even from theſe *inſpired* reſcripts of the Popes. Could not *Eraſmus* ſee this as well as any man?

neceſſary for the reformed church of *England*, was, that concealed Papiſts being brought to this teſt, might not creep into the church unawares, and ſecretly undermine it. "Many" (ſays his Lordſhip) "had complied with "every alteration, both in King *Henry's* and "King *Edward's* reign, who not only declared "themſelves to have been all the while Papiſts, "but became bloody perſecutors in Queen *Ma*-"*ry's* days.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but one main view of K. *Edward's* reformers in compiling the articles of religion, and requiring ſubſcription to them, was to exclude all from the miniſtry who had any tincture of popery. How ineffectual this meaſure was for the purpoſe, the good Biſhop here confeſſes. And therefore, though this may go far towards excuſing *Cranmer* and *Ridley* for contriving ſuch a teſt, yet it will by no means juſtify Queen *Elizabeth's* Biſhops, who had ſeen what had happened in Queen *Mary's* days, for continuing ſuch a teſt any longer. Much leſs will any ſuch conſideration avail to excuſe the impoſers of ſubſcription in all ſucceeding times.

Elizabeth, indeed, had very different notions from thoſe of King *Edward* and his biſhops, concerning reformation. She thought it right to humour the Papiſts, and for that purpoſe, made very conſiderable abatements in thoſe terms of Proteſtant communion, which were inſiſted on in *Edward's* ſyſtem.

Among

Among other things, the compilers, or the reviewers of *Edward's* articles, ſtruck out a long paſſage againſt the *real preſence*. "The ſecret of "which, ſays Biſhop *Burnet* himſelf, was this. "The Queen and her council ſtudied to unite "all into the communion of the church. And it "was alledged, that ſuch an expreſs definition "againſt a real preſence, might drive from the "church many who were ſtill of that perſuaſion: "and therefore, it was thought to be enough to "condemn tranſubſtantiation, and to ſay, that "Chriſt was preſent after a ſpiritual manner, and "received by faith. To ſay more, as it was "judged ſuperfluous, ſo it might occaſion divi-"ſion. Upon this, theſe words were by com-"mon conſent left out [*S*]."

Would one believe, that the ſame hand which wrote this paſſage, could raiſe an apology for our *preſent* articles, from the neceſſity of excluding concealed papiſts out of the church, by a teſt

[*S*] *Hiſt. Reform.* vol. ii. p. 406. This *mutilation* of the article concerning the *real preſence*, was one of thoſe things which drove the ancient Puritans out of the eſtabliſhed church. *Hiſt. Reform.* vol. iii. Collection, p. 334. And, in theſe latter times, had given occaſion to compliment the church of *England*, as holding the *real preſence*, as well as her ſiſter of *Rome*. See *Appendix* to Dr. *Parr's* life of Archbiſhop *Uſher*, p. 11. c. q. 8. This is likewiſe one principal circumſtance, which both Popiſh and Proteſtant writers have brought to ſhew the very little difference there is between the churches of *Rome* and *England*. *Vid. Franciſci a Sta. Clara* (alias *Davenport*) Expoſit. paraphraſticam, in articulos confeſſionis Anglicæ. In Art. 28. and *Heylin's* Introduct. to the Life of Archbiſhop *Laud*.

with which none of them would comply? I ſay the *preſent* articles, for nothing can be more abſurd, than to ſuppoſe that, the compilers of any *other* articles, ſhould profit by their experience of what had happened in the reigns of *Henry*, *Edward*, and *Mary*. Theſe inconſiſtencies, however, are unavoidable, even by the greateſt and beſt of of men, when they find themſelves under a neceſſity of defending eccleſiaſtical inſtitutions, only becauſe they are *eſtabliſhed*.

Hitherto we meet with nothing in this introduction, to juſtify our reformers in eſtabliſhing theſe articles of faith and doctrine, ſave only the bare excuſe of following the faſhion of other churches. The biſhop himſelf has as good as confeſſed, that there is no ſcriptural authority for any ſuch practice. It has likewiſe been ſhewn, that with reſpect to the particular occaſions of the church of *England*, the publication of theſe articles had no effect, either in ſilencing the calumnies of Papiſts, or keeping ſuch of them out of the church as were inclined, either wholly to temporize, or to meet the church of *England* half way.

We might then ſave ourſelves the trouble of entering into any debate, concerning the extent of that authority by which our articles were eſtabliſhed, and ſubſcription to them enjoined. I will, however, make no ſcruple to affirm, that no ſuch authority is veſted in the church. Farther than this I ſhall not enquire, otherwiſe than as the good biſhop leads me the way.

His

His Lordſhip obſerves, "that whatever may "be the ſanctions of a law, it does not alter the "nature of things, nor oblige the conſciences of "the ſubjects, unleſs they come under the ſame "perſuaſion." This is particularly true of any ſuch law, as infringes upon the privileges to which Chriſtians are intitled under the profeſſion of the Goſpel; and this, we ſay, is the caſe of all laws enjoining aſſent and conſent to human creeds and confeſſions, which appear not to thoſe, of whom ſuch aſſent and conſent are required, to be in perfect agreement with the word of God. It is therefore of no ſort of conſequence, whether ſuch creeds and confeſſions are eſtabliſhed by civil authority, or by ſynods and convocations of profeſſed theologues. Upon Proteſtant principles, neither the one nor the other can encroach, ſo much as a ſtraw-breadth, upon the rights of private judgment, in matters of faith or doctrine.

His Lordſhip indeed would ſeem to ſay ſomething in vindication of our Princes, for interpoſing at the Reformation in a point ſo extremely tender and delicate; inſinuating, that they did not pretend to judge in points of faith, or to decide controverſies. "The part," ſays he, "they had in the Reformation was only this,— "being ſatisfied with the grounds on which it "went, they received it themſelves, and enacted "it for the people; and this, in his Lordſhip's "judgment, they had as much right to do, as "every private man had to chooſe for himſelf, "and believe according to his reaſon and con- "ſcience."

I pre-

I preſume, his Lordſhip might mean, that our Princes were ſatisfied with the grounds of Reformation, by thoſe churchmen whoſe province it was to examine them. But here, I apprehend, his Lordſhip, by an ambiguity of expreſſion, hath put the change upon his readers, and perhaps upon himſelf. The true ground of Reformation was, the neceſſity of being relieved from the incroachments, impoſitions, and oppreſſions of popery. The abolition of theſe grievances, our Princes (including the legiſlature) had not only a right, but were in duty bound, to enact for the people. When popery was out of the way, the ſcriptures became the rule of religion; and to ſay that theſe ſacred oracles did not contain a ſufficient formulary of faith and doctrine (to let alone forms of worſhip) without explanations of artificial theology, is degrading them once more to that unworthy ſtate of ſubſerviency to human reſcripts and decrees, from which the Reformers pretended at leaſt to reſcue them. Had our Princes therefore purſued the true grounds of Reformation with uniformity, they ſhould have diſcountenanced the introduction of ſcholaſtic doctrines and articles of faith of man's device, *in their own doctors*, as well as in thoſe of the popiſh perſuaſion. They could not be ignorant, that an Engliſh convocation had no more right to preſcribe to the people directories of faith, diſtinct from the ſcriptures, than an Italian council: or that a ſincere Engliſh Proteſtant could no more make his Biſhop his Proxy in

matters of Faith and Conſcience, than he could transfer his civil allegiance, which he had ſworn to the King or Queen of England, to the Pope of *Rome*.

Both the civil and eccleſiaſtical authority were on this, as on all other like occaſions, under the controul of the word of GOD. The word of GOD had given a liberty to the diſciples of *Jeſus*, which no earthly power had any right either to take away or abridge. It was indeed the buſineſs and the duty, both of the civil and eccleſiaſtical power, to promote Chriſtian edification among the people, for which the word of God had made ſufficient room, without breaking in upon Chriſtian liberty.

It is true, this Chriſtian liberty might be abuſed by abſurd and licentious men, ſo as to endanger the peace, and ſubvert the order, of *civil* ſociety. Here the civil magiſtrate has his right of interpoſing reſerved to him by the Goſpel itſelf. A conſideration, which, as it fully juſtifies Chriſtian Princes in their demolition of Popery, ſo likewiſe does it reſerve to them an authority to reſtrain all religious corruptions and extravagances which have a *like* effect, and break out into overt acts of oppoſition to the righteous regulations of civil ſociety: which however never can be affected, where any man or any body of men demand or attempt *no more* than to be permitted to believe and worſhip God, peaceably and ſincerely, in their own way.

The good Biſhop would have us believe, as hath been obſerved, that the ſyſtem which took place at the Reformation, was only barely *enacted* by our Princes, who, according to him, left it to the church to judge in points of faith, and to decide controverſies. How the fact *ſtood* in ſome periods, I will not ſtay to inquire. This I know, that in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth* the orthodox *Law* was, that "*Religion being variable according to the* "*pleaſure of ſucceeding Princes*, that which at one "time is held for orthodox, may at another be "accounted ſuperſtitious, &c." [*X*] A maxim which was exemplified ſo often, in the reigns of *Henry*, *Edward*, and *Elizabeth*, and in ſo many inſtances, where the church, as ſuch, had not the leaſt concern, that it may very well counterbalance the few caſes the Biſhop may be ſuppoſed to have had in his eye, when he ventured this aſſertion with the public.

But theſe are points, which we are now no longer permitted to debate with the powers in being. The ſtate and the church are cordially agreed to continue theſe articles as ſtandards of orthodoxy, and the ſubſcription to them, as an indiſpenſable condition of holding any preferment in the church of *England*. Still they are points very proper to be debated with an honeſt man's own heart: and from this ſort of ſelf-controverſy no honeſt man is precluded; I had almoſt ſaid can well be excuſed. For, if the Chriſtian religion is of divine authority, and our future happineſs depends, in any degree, upon having its

[*X*] Duke's Law of Charitable Uſes, p. 131, 132.

documents

documents pure, and unmixed with human commandments and traditions, the man, who is in a capacity to examine into the truth, muſt be inexcuſably raſh, ſhould he receive and embrace doctrines unſupported by theſe ſacred oracles, merely becauſe they are eſtabliſhed by the powers of this world.

To help us out of the doubts and difficulties which may ariſe in the courſe of ſuch an examination, Biſhop *Burnet's* next endeavours are laid out in explaining, 1. The *uſe* of the Articles; and, 2. The *importance* of the Clergy's ſubſcribing to them.

By the *uſe* of the articles, one would ſuppoſe, at firſt ſight, his Lordſhip meant their *utility* to the church. But, however, without entering farther into this matter than we have already ſeen, and after a ſhort digreſſion, importing that they are not merely articles of union and peace, he proceeds to tell us, that, "with reſpect to the "laity, they are only articles of church-commu-"nion."

But I would deſire to know in what inſtance our articles ever had any operation this way? What layman is or ever was required either to ſubſcribe, or ſolemnly declare his aſſent to them, as a qualification for communion with the church of England? *Phyſicians* and *Civilians* indeed ſubſcribe them, to entitle themſelves to academical degrees, and the latter ſometimes to qualify themſelves for eccleſiaſtical offices. But, ſuppoſe any of theſe men ſhould chooſe to forego the degree,

or

or the office for which he is a candidate, rather than comply with this condition (and ſome ſuch I have known) would this be a ſufficient reaſon for excluding him from church-communion? or was ever any one excluded upon any ſuch account?

The Biſhop indeed ſays, that the 5th canon, which declares "thoſe to be excommunicated "*ipſo facto* who ſhall affirm any of theſe articles "to be erroneous, or ſuch as he may not with a "good conſcience ſubſcribe to, extends to the "whole body of the people, laity as well as cler-"gy." I apprehend, that a refuſal to ſubſcribe the articles in the caſes abovementioned, amounts to ſomething equivalent to the *affirmation* cenſured in the canon; not to mention laymen of great name and note, who, both in word and writing, have affirmed as much in plain terms. And yet who ever heard that any of theſe were prohibited from communicating with the church on this account; or were ever aſked a ſingle queſtion upon the ſubject? Either therefore his Lordſhip muſt have been miſtaken in his interpretation of this canon; or here is a relaxation of diſcipline in the church, extremely diſhonourable to her governours, and highly ſcandalous to her members. Be this as it may, this is a matter of fact, which proves to a demonſtration, that our thirty-nine Articles, conſidered as articles of church-communion, are of no manner of uſe to the church, or ſignificance to the laity. Some of our divines, indeed, have attempted to bring

the

the laity under this obligation of aſſenting to article-doctrine, by way of *implication*. Others, however, have frankly exonerated them from any ſuch bond, and have left church-communion upon a more righteous and reaſonable foundation, by a way of reaſoning, which, to me at leaſt, looks like condemning the church for inſiſting on clerical ſubſcriptions, as well as laical aſſent, to human doctrines and articles of faith [Y].

[Y] Dr. *Stebbing* is among the former ſort, who bluſhes not to ſay, "there is the ſame need of human explications of "ſcripture-words, with reſpect to lay-communion, that there "is with reſpect to miniſterial communion. For the holding "the faith of the Goſpel, neceſſary in both caſes, and a *gene-*"*ral belief* that the ſcriptures are the word of GOD, is no evi-"dence of *this*, in either." Rational Enquiry, p. 77. No evidence of what? I ſuppoſe he means, no evidence of communion with any particular church which eſpouſes theſe human explications. More ſhame for the church which requires more and other terms of communion, than Chriſt himſelf required. But, if we may believe Biſhop *Bull*, this church is not the church of *England:* which, according to his Lordſhip, "does "not require the laity to ſubſcribe the articles, though they are "as much obliged to acknowledge the fundamental articles of "the Chriſtian faith, as the moſt learned doctors." That is to ſay, as much obliged as Chriſtians, and, in *foro conſcientiæ*, to acknowledge thoſe fundamentals (not as they are contained in the thirty-nine articles, for then they would be obliged to ſubſcribe, or give their public aſſent to thoſe articles, but) as they lye in the ſcriptures. Which plainly implies, that the church of England thinks this *general acknowledgment* ſufficient evidence of the communion of her lay-members with her. Dr. *Stebbing* may wiſh it were otherwiſe, and, when he wrote his *Rational Enquiry*, might hope the laity, at ſome time, would be bound to aſſent to theſe human explications. But, I truſt, he will not live to be gratified.

But,

But, however that may be, the ſubſcription of the clergy ſtands, it ſeems, upon a different footing, and, as a matter of more conſequence, will demand a more particular examination.

The Biſhop begins this part of the caſe with obſerving, that "the title of the articles bears, "that they were agreed upon in convocation, *for* "*the avoiding of diverſities of opinions, and the ſta-* "*bliſhing conſent touching true religion.* Where," ſays his Lordſhip, "it is evident that a conſent "in opinion is deſigned." Namely (if common language is the vehicle of common ſenſe) ſuch a *conſent*, as is abſolutely excluſive of all diverſities of opinions. Now the caſe ſtanding thus, and the title of the articles, as well as the canonical form of ſubſcription, remaining the ſame to this very hour, what poſſible pretence can there be for conſtruing the act of ſubſcription into a ſimple declaration of the ſubſcribers poſitive opinion, in a certain *literal* and *grammatical* ſenſe, different from the *literal grammatical* ſenſe of another ſubſcriber? The caſuiſtry that allows different men to ſubſcribe the ſame ſet of articles, which, as they all agree, were intended *to prevent* diverſities of opinions, not only in *different*, but even in *contrary* ſenſes, muſt be weak and contemptible, beyond any thing of the kind that ever came from the Jeſuits. Theſe pious fathers, in all ſuch caſes, bring their matters to bear at a pinch, by the help of equivocation and mental reſerves. We deſpiſe and diſown this practice as infamous; and yet, it ſeems, we can condeſcend

to

to arrive at the ſame ſort of ends, by quibbling upon the ambiguous ſignification of words.

Alas for pity! that, to explain and defend this mean, unmanly expedient, ſhould fall to the ſhare of this illuſtrious Prelate, contrary to his own generous ſentiments; as too plainly appears from the following paſſage, cited from a piece he was obliged to publiſh in his own vindication, while the ſheets of his *Expoſition* were hardly dry from the preſs.

"I do not deny but men of the *Calviniſt* perſuaſion may think they have cauſe given them to complain of my leaving the articles open to thoſe of another perſuaſion. But thoſe of the *Arminian* ſide" [who, by the way, were the men who bore the moſt tyrannous hate againſt him] "muſt be men of a peculiar tincture, who except to it" [his Expoſition] "on that account: though, without ſuch enlargement of ſenſe, their ſubſcribing them does not appear to agree ſo well with THEIR OPINIONS, and with COMMON INGENUITY [Z]."

But what cauſe could the good Biſhop give the *Calviniſts* to complain, if there really was any good foundation for this *enlargement of ſenſe*, either in the original deſign of the articles, or in any ſubſequent deciſion of competent authority? The *Arminian* ſenſe is certainly not the original ſenſe of the articles: nor is it a ſenſe they will *naturally* receive. It is a ſenſe which was never

[Z] Biſhop *Burnet's* Remarks on the Examination of his Expoſition of the Second Article of our Church, p. 3.

once in the heads of thoſe who compiled them, nor of thoſe who gave them the ſanction of that act of parliament, under which they are ſubſcribed to this preſent hour.

But, it ſeems, there is a *royal declaration* at the head of our articles, which makes a conſiderable abatement in the ſtrictneſs of our ſubſcriptions, and leaves room, in expreſs terms, for theſe different *literal grammatical* ſenſes.

It remains then that we examine the validity of this *declaration*, upon which ſo great a ſtreſs is laid; wherein we ſhall endeavour to be as accurate, and at the ſame time as candid, as poſſible.

Biſhop *Burnet* tells us, that this declaration was ſet forth by King *Charles* I. "and little doubt "can be made," ſays his Lordſhip, "but it was "prepared by Archbiſhop *Laud* [*A*]."

That King *Charles* I. publiſhed a *declaration* along with the articles in the year 1630, we have the teſtimony of Dr. *Nicholls* [*B*], who however cites a paſſage from it which is not to be found in the declaration referred to by Biſhop *Burnet*; that is to ſay, in the declaration which in his time was, and ſtill is, prefixed to our thirty-nine articles. The conſequence is, that King *Charles*'s declaration is dropped long ago, and has no authority to decide any thing in the preſent queſtion.

The declaration which ſtands before the 39 articles in our preſent books, is more generally

[*A*] Ibid. p. 3.

[*B*] Dr. *Nicholls*'s Commentary on the Articles, p. 3.

believed

believed to have been firſt publiſhed by King *James* I. and is the ſame from which, Dr. *Nicholls* ſays, Biſhop *Burnet* drew his inference, "that an "article being conceived in ſuch general words, "that it can admit of different literal and gram-"matical ſenſes, even when the ſenſes are plainly "contrary to each other, both ſides may ſubſcribe "the article with a good conſcience, and without "any equivocation."

But Dr. *Nicholls* believed that the force of *this* declaration did not, nor was deſigned to extend beyond his [King James's] time. If this be true, this declaration has no right to the place it occupies. It is of no uſe or ſignificance to us of the preſent times; nor could any rule of interpretation be either inferred from it, or authoriſed by it.

Dr. *Nicholls*, indeed, gives no particular reaſon for his judgment. There was no occaſion. The very face of the declaration ſhews that he had very good grounds for what he ſaid.

The King ſet forth this declaration by virtue of his being ſupreme head of the church. But acts of ſupremacy, when unconfirmed by the legiſlature, are merely *perſonal*, and die with the particular Prince whoſe acts they are, unleſs they are revived by his ſucceſſors, with the ſame formalities which were obſerved at their firſt appearance.

The declaration before us is deſtitute of all theſe formalities, even with reſpect to the Prince (whoever he was) by whom it was at firſt ſet

forth. There is no royal ſignature at the head of it; no atteſtation of his Majeſty's command, by any of the great officers of the crown; no mention of the time when, or the place whence, it iſſued. And that it has never been acknowledged by any ſucceeding Prince, is evident from the following circumſtance, namely, that, during the reign of Queen *Anne*, the title of it ſtood invariably as it had done from the firſt, *viz.* His *Majeſty's Declaration*, which would not have been the caſe, had HER Majeſty adopted this reſcript as her own act, authenticated by the ſpecific ratification of her royal predeceſſors.

On another hand, the language of this declaration is ſuch, as is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the fundamental principles of our preſent happy conſtitution.

"We will not endure," ſays the declaration, "any varying, or departing, in the leaſt degree, "from the doctrine and diſcipline of the church "of *England* NOW eſtabliſhed." This might tally well enough with the politics of a *James* or a *Charles*; but if our princes and people, in after-times, had perſiſted in not enduring the leaſt departure from the *doctrine* of the church of *England*, particularly as it is exhibited in the homily againſt *wilful rebellion*, what muſt have become of us at the *Revolution?* Where had been our acts of ſettlement and limitation of the crown to King *William*, and the preſent royal family [C]? If

[C] See theſe queſtions anſwered, and the point they relate to handled by a maſterly writer, in a pamphlet intitled, *A plain*

the

the *diſcipline* of the church had continued *invariable*, not only the act tolerating proteſtant diſſenters had never ſeen the light, but the churches cenſure, in his Majeſty's *commiſſion eccleſiaſtical*, had been in full force, not to mention many other wholeſome correctives, provided for *puritans* and *heretics* by the pious care of Archbiſhop *Laud*.

The declaration, indeed, remits the offenders againſt it for their puniſhment, to the ſaid *commiſſion eccleſiaſtical*, as if it was ſtill in full force. But this only ſerves to betray its weakneſs and impotence, and to ſhew, that it has no more authority to licence any one practice, or to preſcribe any one duty to Britiſh ſubjects, than an edict of the *French* King.

Biſhop *Burnet*, in the pamphlet above cited, gives the following account of the occaſion of publiſhing this declaration. "The *Arminian* "party (as they were called) was then favoured. "To theſe it was objected, that they departed "from the true ſenſe of the articles. But it was "anſwered by them, that, ſince they took the "articles in their literal and grammatical ſenſe, "they did not prevaricate. And to ſupport this, "that declaration was ſet forth."

Here it is not denied, that the *literal* and *grammatical* ſenſe of the *Arminians* was different from the *true* ſenſe of the articles. But how could men ſubſcribe to articles as *true*, when they could not

and proper anſwer to this queſtion, Why does not the Biſhop of Clogher reſign his preferments? Printed for *Shuckburgh*, 1753.

deny that they ſubſcribed to them in a ſenſe that was *not* the *true* ſenſe of them, without prevarication? If therefore the declaration was not ſet forth to ſupport *prevarication*, what was it intended to ſupport?

His Lordſhip, I ſuppoſe, may have given a true, tho' no very honourable account of the occaſion of this declaration; but it was an occaſion that was given, and might be taken, in the latter part of King *James's* reign, as likely as in any part of King *Charles's*. There is indeed no evidence that *James* ever turned *Arminian* in principle. This, however, was the party that ſtuck to him in his meaſures and his projects, and which it became neceſſary for him, on that account, to humour, and to accommodate, by every expedient that might ſet them in a reſpectable light with the people, without bringing any reflexion upon his own conſiſtency. Whoever conſiders the quibbling and equivocal terms, in which this inſtrument is drawn, will, I am perſuaded, obſerve the diſtreſs of a man divided between his principles and his intereſts; that is, of a man exactly in the ſituation of King *James* I. in the three laſt years of his reign.

Charles I. was an avowed *Arminian*, upon the ſuppoſition that all *Calviniſts* were enemies to *his* kind of policy, both in church and ſtate. His father's declaration had not wrought the end propoſed by the *Arminians*, and therefore to make them eaſy, in the year 1626, he iſſued a proclamation,

mation, enjoining ſilence to all parties with reſpect to the points then in diſpute. "The ef-"fects of which proclamation, ſays *Ruſhworth*, "how equally ſoever intended, became the ſtop-"ping of the *Puritans* mouths, and an uncon-"trouled liberty to the tongues and pens of the "*Arminian* party [*E*]." Which is eaſily accounted for, when it is remembered, that the reſtleſs and factious *Laud* had the execution of this proclamation in his hands.

This partiality brought on ſo much oppreſſion and ill-treatment of the party obnoxious to the court, that the Houſe of Commons complained of it in their remonſtrance againſt the Duke of *Buckingham*, June 1628 [*F*]; and not long after, namely, January 28th, 1628-9, upon the motion of Sir *John Elliot*, entered into this remarkable vow.

We the Commons in Parliament aſſembled, do claim, proteſt, and avow for truth, the ſenſe of the articles of religion, which were eſtabliſhed by parliament in the thirteenth year of our late Queen Elizabeth, *which, by the public act of the church of* England, *and by the general and current expoſitions of the writers of our church, have been delivered unto us. And we reject the ſenſe of the* Jeſuits *and* Arminians, *and all others wherein they differ from us* [*G*].

Whether either the King or the houſe of commons, in a ſeparate capacity, have a power to in-

[*E*] Hiſt. Collections, vol. I. p. 412, 413.

[*F*] *Ruſhworth*, vol. I. p. 621. [*G*] Ibid. p. 649.

terpret the articles of religion for the people, will admit of a diſpute; but that this vow, or proteſtation, conſidered as an act of ſtate, hath greatly the advantage of the *declaration* in queſtion, in point of authority, will admit of none. It is equivalent at leaſt to any other *reſolution* of the houſe of commons. It is found among the moſt authentic records of parliament. And whatever force or operation it had the moment it was publiſhed, the ſame it has to this hour; being never revoked or repealed in any ſucceeding parliament, nor containing any one particular, which is not in perfect agreement with every part of our preſent conſtitution, civil and religigious.

On the other hand, here is a nameleſs, and for ought that any one knows, a ſpurious *declaration*. It is a problem to this day in what reign it was ſet forth; which is a circumſtance hardly poſſible, if any original record of it were forth-coming, with thoſe ſolemn atteſtations neceſſary to give it the weight and authority of a royal mandate [*G*]. Not to mention thoſe particulars in it,

[*G*] It is not eaſy to ſuppoſe but there muſt be ſome printed copy of this *Declaration* ſtill extant, of ſufficient antiquity to aſcertain, whether it was originally ſet out by King *James* I. or King *Charles* I. And it were to be wiſhed, that if any gentleman hath ſuch ancient copy in his cuſtody, he would favour the public with an account of it. On the other hand, it is next to incredible, that if any ſuch copy had been eaſily to be found, two ſuch men as Biſhop *Burnet* and Dr. *Nicholls* ſhould differ ſo widely in their accounts of it. The former aſcribes this *Decla-*

which

which are plainly repugnant to the preſent eſtabliſhment both in church and ſtate.

It is indeed ſurprizing, that Biſhop *Burnet*,

ration to *Charles*, the latter to *James*. And that Declaration which Dr. *Nicholls* aſcribes to King *Charles* I. cites the Biſhop of *Cheſter's* judgment concerning the wiſdom and moderation of the church of *England*, of which Biſhop, or his judgment, there is not the leaſt mention in the *Declaration* now prefixed to our articles, which Dr. *Nicholls*, and I think righily, aſcribes to K. *James*. The inducement I have to agree with Dr. *Nicholls*, is as follows: In July 1628, King *Charles*, in a proclamation, calling in all the copies of Montague's *Apello Cæſarem*, declares that, "out of his care to maintain the church in the "unity of true religion, and the bond of peace, to prevent un-"neceſſary diſputes, he had lately cauſed the articles of religion "to be reprinted, as a rule for avoiding diverſities of opinions." *Ruſhworth*, vol. I. p. 634. Now it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that the bare reprinting the 39 articles *only*, would anſwer any ſuch end, or, indeed, that copies of the articles ſhould be ſo very ſcarce, as to require a new edition for the purpoſes mentioned. Hence I conjecture, that King *Charles* reprinted his father's *Declaration* (the ſame we now have) along with the articles, as more copies of the articles *then* extant undoubtedly wanted it, than had it. That this Declaration was publiſhed along with theſe reprinted articles, appears from Sir *John Elliot's* ſpeech in parliament, the January following, who cites it thus: "It "is ſaid," (namely in a Declaration he had juſt mentioned) "if "there be any difference of opinion, concerning the *ſeaſonable* [perhaps *reaſonable*] "interpretation of the 39 articles, the "biſhops and clergy in the convocation have power to diſpute "it, and to order which way they pleaſe." *Ruſhworth*, vol. I. p. 649. Now this particular is actually to be found in his Majeſty's Declaration, as we *now* have it. You will ſay, perhaps, "And why might not this originally be King *Charles's* own "*Declaration*?" I anſwer, it might be ſo: but if it was, it is unaccountable his Majeſty ſhould not ſay, in the paſſage abovecited, he had cauſed a *Declaration*, made and publiſhed by himſelf, for the purpoſes mentioned in the Proclamation, to be

who

who well knew from what court-intrigues this declaration took its riſe; how grievouſly it was complained of by the Calviniſts, and how effectually it was oppoſed and diſannulled by the abovementioned vow, ſhould lay the leaſt ſtreſs upon it. But not more ſurprizing, than that he ſhould aſcribe the pacifying the diſputes of thoſe times, to "men's general acquieſcence, in being "left to ſubſcribe the articles according to their "literal and grammatical ſenſe." Hiſtory gives us little reaſon to believe, that thoſe diſputes were pacified in any degree worth mentioning. And if the diſputants went off from their *fierceneſs*, it was only becauſe of the tyrannical reſtraint put upon *one ſide*. But of what nature and extent the acquieſcence has been in other reſpects, is ſufficiently evident, in almoſt every controverſial book that has been written in, or ſince thoſe days, where the leaſt occaſion or colour has been given to the diſputant, to reproach the adverſe party with the inſincerity of his ſubſcription.

The Declaration ſtanding upon this infirm ground, it would be doing it too much honour to

printed and publiſhed along with a new edition of the 39 articles. Whereas, if you ſuppoſe, that the Declaration had been publiſhed, and prefixed to the articles in his father's reign, there would be no occaſion for a particular ſpecification of that reſcript, diſtinct from the articles. It would be reprinted along with the articles of courſe, and be conſidered as a part of the book of articles, as I ſuppoſe it is by ſome people, at this very day.

examine

examine the contents of it, and to ſhew what is really the truth, that if there is in it either conſiſtency, or common ſenſe, it binds men to the avoidance of diverſities of opinion, and allows of as little latitude of ſenſes, as the title of the articles itſelf: unleſs there may be two, or two hundred different ſenſes of an article, each of which may be the TRUE and USUAL, as well as the LITERAL ſenſe of it.

There was a time indeed, when Biſhop *Burnet* accounted for the laxity of the articles upon a different footing, which, however, he has not ventured to mention in this Introduction. In the ſecond volume of his Hiſtory of the Reformation, p. 169, he informs his readers, "that upon "the progreſs of the Reformation, the *German* "writers, particularly *Oſiander*, *Illyricus*, and *Am-* "*ſtorfius*, grew too peremptory, and not only "condemned the *Helvetian* churches for differing "from them in the manner of Chriſt's preſence "in the ſacrament, but were ſevere to one ano- "ther for leſſer punctilios, and were *at this time* "exerciſing the patience of the great and learned "*Melancthon*, becauſe he thought, that in things "in their own nature indifferent, they ought to "have complied with the Emperor. *This made* "*thoſe in England reſolve on compoſing theſe articles* "*with great temper in many ſuch points.*"

The good Biſhop, I am afraid, ſays a good deal of this at random, or at leaſt upon plauſible conjecture. A few pages before, he is evidently under great uncertainty, who compiled theſe ar-

ticles. "He had often found it ſaid, that they "were framed by *Cranmer* and *Ridley*; which he "thinks more probable, than that they were giv-"en out to ſeveral biſhops and divines, to deli-"ver their opinions concerning them." But, however, it might be the other way. And, under this uncertainty, who can pretend to ſay with what *temper* they were compoſed, or by what views or conſiderations the compoſers were influenced? However, that they learned any moderation from theſe inedifying conteſts in *Germany*, or had reſpect to the ſufferings of *Melanchon* in *tempering* theſe articles, is rendered utterly incredible by the following facts.

1. At the time referred to, *viz.* 1551, *Melanchon* was employed by *Maurice* Elector of *Saxony*, to draw up a confeſſion of faith, to be exhibited at the council of *Trent*, on the behalf of the *Saxon* churches. In conſequence of which, the principal divines, and preſidents of thoſe churches, being aſſembled at *Leipſic*, this confeſſion, which was no other than that of *Augsburgh* ſomewhat inlarged, was read to them, and ſubſcribed by them, with great unanimity, and with very little oppoſition [*H*]. So that this ſeaſon, with reſpect to *Melanchon's* diſpute with *Illyricus*, &c. was a ſeaſon of great tranquillity, the troubles with which *his* patience, and that of his brethren, was then exerciſed, being chiefly from the Papiſts.

2. In the year 1548, the ſecond of King *Edward's* reign, "Archbiſhop *Cranmer* was driving

[*H*] *Hoſpinian.* Hiſt. Sacrament. vol. ii. p. 373.

"on

" on a deſign, for the better uniting the Prote-
" ſtant churches, *viz.* by having one common
" confeſſion and harmony of faith and doctrine,
" drawn up out of the pure word of God, which
" they might all own and agree in." *Melanchon*, among others, was conſulted by *Cranmer* on this occaſion; and encouraged by the Archbiſhop to go on with his deſign, adviſing him, however, " to avoid all ambiguities of expreſſion; ſaying, " that in the church, it was beſt to call a ſpade " a ſpade, and not to caſt ambiguous words be-
" fore poſterity, as an apple of contention." This advice he inculcates in a ſecond letter, propoſing, " that nothing might be left under *ge-*
" *neral terms*, but expreſſed with all the perſpi-
" cuity and diſtinctneſs imaginable." Some, it ſeems, thought it might be more conducive to peace, to ſuffer ſome difficult and controverted points to paſs under dubious expreſſions, or in the very words of ſcripture, without any particular deciſive ſenſe or explanation impoſed upon them. " This *Melanchon* was againſt, ſaying, " that for his part, he loved not labyrinths; and " that therefore, all his ſtudy was, that whatſo-
" ever matters he undertook to treat of, they " might appear plain and unfolded. That this " was, indeed, the practice of the council of " *Trent*, which therefore made ſuch crafty de-
" crees, that they might defend their errors by " things ambiguouſly ſpoken. But that this ſo-
" phiſtry ought to be far from the church. That

" there

"there is no abſurdity in truth rightly propound-
"ed: and that this goodneſs and perſpicuity of
"things, is greatly inviting, whereſoever there
"be good minds [*I*]."

Undoubtedly *Melanchthon* was highly to be commended for his openneſs and ſincerity. But aſſuredly the method propoſed by him, was not the way to compoſe differences of opinions, or to bring diſagreeing parties to any *temper* upon difficult and controvertible points.

Mr. *Strype* thinks it probable, that *Cranmer* had conſulted *Melanchthon* on this very point, and judges that *Cranmer* was the *certain good man*, mentioned by *Bucer* to *Peter Martyr*, as of opinion, "that ambiguous forms of ſpeech, which "might be taken in a larger acceptation, was the "beſt means of ending the great controverſy "concerning the real preſence, and of reſtoring "peace to the church." Now, whoever *had not*, *Cranmer* certainly *had* a principal hand in framing K. *Edward's* articles; and how likely it was that he ſhould compoſe them with any *temper*, in view either of the ſentiments or the ſituation of *Melanchthon*, the foregoing particulars may ſerve to ſhew.

3. At the very time that *Melanchthon* wrote theſe letters to *Cranmer*, he was in the heat of the diſpute he had with *Illyricus*, concerning the conceſſions he thought ſhould be made to the Emperor, in reference to the ſcheme of pacification

[*I*] *Strype's* Memorials of Archbiſhop *Cranmer*, page 407, 408.

called

called the *Interim*. Theſe conceſſions, however, concerned only ſome rites and ceremonies, which he thought were void of ſuperſtition and idolatry; but which, in the opinion of *Illyricus*, ought to be oppoſed to the death. But, for matters of *doctrine*, *Melanchthon* was as ſtiff and peremptory as *Illyricus* himſelf. He was the perſon who managed the conferences on the ſubject of the *Interim* with the Emperor's Commiſſioners; and particularly wrote the *Cenſure* upon it; and indeed, from the year 1544 to the end of his life, conſtantly maintained that all matters of faith and doctrine, and particularly upon the ſacrament, ſhould be clearly expreſſed, and without any ſophiſtry or ambiguity whatſoever [*K*].

4. Biſhop *Burnet* would have done well, to have ſpecified what thoſe points were, upon which theſe articles were compoſed with ſo great temper. Nothing of this appears upon the face of the articles themſelves. As the Biſhop has ſtated the caſe, it would be moſt natural to look for this temper, where the doctrine of the *real preſence* is ſet forth. But, in this point, K. *Edward's* article was ſo rigid, that the reviewers of our ſyſtem under Queen *Elizabeth* thought it proper to mollify it, by leaving out a long paſſage, where the deciſion of this matter was thought too peremptory, at leaſt for her Majeſty's political purpoſes. And *Hoſpinian* has quoted this very article,

[*K*] *Bayle's* Dict. MELANCTHON, Rem. [*L*], and in the text. See likewiſe *Hoſpinian*, Hiſt. Sacrament, under the year 1548, and downwards.

to

to ſhew, that it was in perfect agreement with *Melancthon's* doctrine on the ſame ſubject. Nor indeed can it be proved by any circumſtance in thoſe articles, that the compilers of them did not clearly and deciſively expreſs themſelves, upon every ſubject they meddled with, in the apteſt and preciſeſt terms the language of thoſe times afforded.

And thus I take my leave of Biſhop *Burnet's* Introduction; leaving the reader to reflect upon the diſagreeable ſituation, in which a man of this worthy Biſhop's learning and diſpoſition muſt be placed, when it is required of him to maintain, what, in his own private judgment, he is conſcious cannot be maintained, without ſuch chicane and ſubterfuge, as it muſt be moſt grievous to an ingenuous mind to employ. I ſhall now proceed to ſhew the ill effects of ſuch miſtaken endeavours in ſome ſtill more remarkable inſtances.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

A View of the embaraſſed and fluctuating Caſuiſtry of thoſe Divines, who do not approve of, or differ from, Biſhop BURNET'S *Method of juſtifying Subſcription to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of* England.

BIſhop *Burnet* was never a favourite with that part of the clergy who ſtyle themſelves *orthodox*. He was apt to ſpeak his mind freely concerning ſuch men and ſuch things in the church, as he thought wanted reformation. His *Paſtoral Care*, wherein he cenſured the manners, as well as the ſpirit and qualifications of his contemporary churchmen with little reſerve, and laid down rules which very few were inclined to follow, created a ſort of offence which was never to be forgiven. And ſuch was their reſentment, that they diſdained to be obliged to him, even for his friendly endeavours to ſave their credit, by pointing out the only method of ſubſcribing the articles, which would not expoſe a large majority of them to the reproach of prevarication.

Accordingly, ſome ſhort time after his Lordſhip's *Expoſition* was made public, the Lower Houſe of Convocation fell upon it with the utmoſt fury, as a performance full of ſcandal to the church, and danger to religion. But, being happily reſtrained from proceeding to extremities in their corporate capacity, the charge was delivered

over to a ſingle hand, who, as they had good reaſon to believe, would make the moſt of it with the public, and who, in the name of his brethren, purſued the Expoſition with ſufficient ſpleen, in a book intituled, *A Prefatory Diſcourſe to an Examination of a late Book, intituled, An Expoſition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of* England, *by* Gilbert *Biſhop of* Sarum, 1702.

This writer's deſign being to ſhew, that the thirty-nine Articles were framed to prevent *diverſities* of *opinions*, and, at the ſame time, to prove the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of ſuch a meaſure, it became neceſſary for him to appeal to the matter of fact, which he very undauntedly does in the following words.

"To the honour of the compilers of our Articles, it muſt be acknowledged, that for the "ſevenſcore years laſt paſt [*i. e.* from 1562 to "1702] ſince the publication of them, they have "prevented diverſity of opinion in the church, "to that degree, that LITTLE or NO diſpute "hath hitherto been, about the different ſenſes "the words may, in common and unforced con-"ſtruction, be made to bear [*A*]."

Here we have a ſhort, but at the ſame time a full and effectual defence of thoſe who compiled the Articles, and of the church for enjoining ſubſcription to them, as well as a proof of the fruitleſs and ſuperfluous pains taken by Biſhop *Burnet* to reconcile men of different principles and opi-

[*A*] *Prefatory Diſcourſe*, p. 12.

nions,

nions, by a peaceable and conſcientious acquieſcence in literal and grammatical ſenſes. It is, indeed, the only way in which ſuch ſyſtems, conſidered as *teſts* of faith and doctrine, can be defended. For, if *diverſities of opinions* and *diſputes* have not in fact been prevented by them, it is much to be ſuſpected, that ſuch forms may have been acceſſary to ſome diſputes and diviſions, which did not exiſt before ſuch forms were eſtabliſhed [*B*].

When a candid and charitable reader, who has made any inquiry into the true ſtate of the caſe, meets with aſſertions, which, like this, bids defiance to all hiſtory, coming from the pen of a grave writer, who does not appear to have been out of his ſenſes, he would be willing to underſtand him with any favourable allowance, rather than ſuſpect him of advancing a palpable untruth, for the ſake of ſerving a preſent turn.

[*B*] "It is the miſery of Chriſtendom that we ſhould build "too much upon articles of doctrine, upon opinions, tenets, "and ſyſtems; and they muſt be ſubſcribed to, ſworn to, and "believed; which cauſeth almoſt all the diviſion of the "Chriſtian world. We are ſo earneſt in aſſerting the ortho-"doxy of our own eſpouſed doctrines, that we moſt lamenta-"bly fall out, break peace, loſe charity, and wretchedly neglect "the weightier matters, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the "practice of ſincere truth and righteouſneſs." *Stryp's* Sermon at *Hackney*, September 21, 1707, p. 12. Beſides what this venerable man had ſeen with his own eyes, his particular ſtudies had opened to him a melancholy view of the woful effects of theſe ſyſtematical teſts, from the very time of their commencement in Proteſtant churches, which he, as a true friend to his own church, has communicated for her uſe, but hitherto to very little purpoſe.

And therefore, when my aſtoniſhment (occaſioned by the ſudden recollection of many things I had read in the authors referred to in the margin [C]) had a little ſubſided, I began to caſt about how this writer's aſſertion might be made conſiſtent with the real truth of the caſe?

The firſt expedient for this purpoſe which occurred to me, was, that this avoidance of diverſity muſt be underſtood of a ſimple ſilence and acquieſcence on either ſide, in ſome common and unforced conſtruction, which, as he has expreſſed it, the words of the article might be *made to bear*. But, beſides that I could ſee no difference between this plan of peace and Biſhop *Burnet's literal* and *grammatical* ſenſes, I found it afterwards to be this author's aim to prove, that none of the articles had, or was ever underſtood to have, a *double meaning*. Nor indeed, admitting ſuch double meaning, could the articles be ſaid to have prevented diverſity of opinions, in *any* degree.

After many fruitleſs trials, methought I diſcerned the healing quibble lurking under the words *in the church*: the author, I ſuppoſe, being of opinion, that whoever diſputed the ſingle orthodox ſenſe of an article, was really not *in*, but

[C] *Roger's* Preface to his Expoſition.——*Fuller's* Church-Hiſtory.——*Heylin's* Quinquarticular Hiſtory.——*Hickman's* Anſwer.——*Prynne's* Anti-arminianiſm.——Dr. *Ward's* Letters to Archbiſhop *Uſher*, apud *Parr's* Life.——Biſhop *Barlow's* Remains.——*Edwards's* Veritas Redux.——Biſhop *Davenant's* Pieces.——*Montague's* and *Carlton's* Controverſy, and an hundred more.

out of the church, in conſequence of the *ipſo-facto*-excommunication mentioned in the 5th of our canons; which would leave none *in the church*, but ſuch as were all of a mind.

And indeed I very much incline ſtill to adhere to this ſolution of the difficulty, the rather as there is no other way of ſecuring the veracity of another orthodox brother, and reſpectable contemporary of our own, the late reverend Mr. *John White*, B. D. who hath laboured with great zeal and earneſtneſs in the ſame occupation of defending ſubſcriptions; and to this *ſevenſcore* years of peace and reſt, hath, without the leaſt heſitation, added *forty-ſeven* more.

The caſe with Mr. *White* was this: Mr. *Samuel Chandler*, at the end of his pamphlet entituled, *The Caſe of Subſcription*, &c. *calmly and impartially reviewed*, publiſhed 1748, had printed the Speech of the famous Mr. *Turretine*, ſpoken to the Leſſer Council of *Geneva*, June 29, 1706, touching ſubſcription to the *Formula Conſenſus*: the effect of which oration was, that all ſubſcriptions to human formularies were thenceforward aboliſhed by public authority; a promiſe only being required inſtead thereof, that the perſon to be admitted to the function either of miniſter or profeſſor, would teach nothing, either in the church or academy, contrary to the ſaid *Conſenſus*, or the Confeſſion of the Gallican church, for the ſake of peace [*D*]. This precedent Mr. *Chandler*

[*D*] In a pamphlet publiſhed 1719, intituled *A Letter to the Rev. Mr.* Tong, &c. *occaſioned by the late differences among*

failed not to recommend, as a very proper one for the church of *England* to follow; which provoked the abovementioned Mr. *White* to make the following reply.

"Because they [the Divines of *Geneva*] or "moſt of them, had ſwerved from the doctrines

the Diſſenters, an account is given of this abolition of ſubſcriptions, different from this of Mr. *Chandler*, but not leſs honourable to the magiſtrates of *Geneva*, to the following effect. "In the year 1706, a Divine of *Neufchâtel*, Mr. *Jacques* "*Vial de Beaumont*, a very worthy Miniſter of the Goſpel, be- "ing called to *Geneva* to exerciſe his miniſtry there, was re- "quired to ſubſcribe that numerous ſet of articles [the *Con-* "*ſenſus*]. Mr. *Beaumont*, inſtead of ſubſcribing as required, "wrote to the following purpoſe: *Theſe I aſſent to, as far as* "*they agree with the holy ſcriptures, which I believe to be the* "*word of God. I will always teach what God ſhall teach me* "*from thence; and will never, knowingly, maintain or teach* "*any thing contrary thereunto.*" After ſome debates and ap- "peals from one aſſembly to another, a form was agreed upon, "much to the ſame purpoſe as that of Mr. *Beaumont*. To which "was added indeed an *exhortation* not to teach any thing con- "trary to the deciſions of the Synod of *Dort*, the forty Articles "of the *French* churches, or the Catechiſm of *Geneva*, for the "ſake of keeping peace and union in the church." pag. 77. The material difference between this account of the abolition of ſubſcriptions at *Geneva*, and that of Mr. *Chandler*, is, that what the latter ſays was a *promiſe* required of the candidate, the other makes to be only to be an *exhortation* from the miniſtry. A difference indeed far from inconſiderable: and, as I remember, Mr. *Chandler* was reminded, in a printed letter addreſſed to him about that time, "That, while this *promiſe* was inſiſted "upon, he [*Chandler*] had no great room to boaſt as he does "of the moderation of the church of *Geneva*, ſuch a promiſe, "*in foro conſcientiæ*, amounting to little leſs than a formal ſub- "ſcription." This objection does not affect a ſimple *exhortation*, againſt which a teacher, who ſhould think differently

which

" which they were called to assent and subscribe " to, and were therefore uneasy till their sub- " scriptions were removed, are WE to be called " upon to remove ours? WE, *who have no such* " *trouble and division amongst* US, *upon the points to* " *be assented and subscribed to* [*E*]?"

This is an home push indeed, and wants only the single circumstance of TRUTH, to intitle it to the honour of deciding all future controversy concerning subscriptions, in the church of *England*.

But in good earnest; could Mr. *White* be ignorant of the *trouble* which Dr. *Clarke* and Mr. *Whiston* met with, for their deviations from the sense of the eighth, and some others of our articles? Had he never heard of the controversy concerning *Arian* subscription? Could *he*, could

from his exhorters, would always have an unanswerable remonstrance from *Acts* iv. 19. With respect to the matter of fact, 'tis difficult, if not impossible, to decide whether Mr. *Chandler* or Mr. *Tong's* correspondent were better informed. The latter, indeed, acknowledges, he had not received an *exact* account how the matter was transacted at *Geneva*. Mr. *Chandler*, as coming so long after him, should know more of the matter; and that throws the probability on the side of the *promise*. But then can any one imagine, that Mr. *Beaumont*, who undertakes to teach *what God should teach him from the scriptures*, would bind himself by a *promise*, which might very possibly oblige him to *suppress* what God should teach him? Perhaps there may be a mystery in this, which our Dissenters choose not to reveal. All religious societies have their *ἀπόῤῥητα*.

[*E*] A Letter to the reverend Mr. *Samuel Chandler*, occasioned by his late Discourse intituled, *The Case of Subscription*, &c. pag. 71.

any man, who has read a twentieth part of our controverſies ſince the commencement of the current century, be ignorant, that this reproach of going againſt their ſubſcriptions, has been caſt in the teeth of our moſt eminent writers, and that too in the moſt opprobrious terms [*F*]? And is there, all this while, no *trouble* or *diviſion* among us, upon the points to be aſſented and ſubſcribed to?

Why, no. The words WE and US, in the above-cited paſſage, relate to no body but the *orthodox*, who have all along been unanimous in

[*F*] "The unchriſtian art of confeſſing the faith without "believing it. An art which, I am ſorry to ſay, has of late "been brought to its utmoſt perfection." Archdeacon *Brydges's* Charge, 1721, p. 9. See likewiſe a book intituled *Ophiomachus*, vol. ii. from p. 292. to 300. where great freedoms of this kind are taken with ſome of the greateſt names then in our country. The late controverſies occaſioned by Dr *Middleton's* Free Inquiry; *Free and candid Diſquiſitions*; *Eſſay on Spirit*, &c. furniſh more inſtances ſtill. Nor hath Mr. *White* himſelf withheld his mite from this collection. "It is commonly ſuppoſed," ſays he, "that the Creeds and Articles of the church of *England* are ſubſcribed only by the clergy of the church of *England*. But be it known to all the people of *Great Britain*, "that there is not in the kingdom one diſſenting miniſter, who "has complied with the terms of the *Toleration*, but has ſolemnly ſubſcribed the Articles, bating three or four,——and "has alſo ſubſcribed the three Creeds (yes, the *Athanaſian*, as "well as the other) *that they ought thoroughly to be received* and "*believed*, &c." Good-natured ſoul! But, happily for the Diſſenters, the civil powers (and not the church) being appointed to take ſuch ſubſcription, are not ſo immediately *intereſted* in the glory of Orthodoxy. *White's* Appendix to his third Letter, p. 80.

their

their opinions. While they who have occaſioned theſe troubles and diviſions, and raiſed theſe doubts concerning points of doctrine in the Articles, are not allowed to belong to this *ſelect* number, although they continue to miniſter in the church of *England*, and ſome of them, perhaps, to miniſter in the higheſt ſtations in it.

That this is Mr. *White's* meaning (whatever that of the Convocation-man might be) is pretty clear from the tenor of his expoſtulation with his diſſenting adverſary. "Did the church," ſays he, "perſecute *its own members*, at any time? Were "you or your fathers ever perſecuted, while they "*continued in the church?* And were they *driven* "*out of it* by thoſe perſecutions?" The pertinence of which queſtions plainly conſiſts in this, that, according to Mr. *White's* notions, all theſe old *perſecuted* Puritans ceaſed to be members of the church, the moment they offended againſt canonical conformity, in virtue of the *ipſo facto* excommunication, whatever external marks of church-membership they might otherwiſe bear about them.

But the misfortune of this ſyſtem of Mr. *White's* is, that it would contract the conditions of church-membership into a leſs compaſs than is convenient for the orthodox themſelves, who have by no means been uniform in their opinions concerning the ſenſe of particular Articles.

"There is not any ſort of agreement," ſays a ſenſible writer, "in the notions of thoſe two emi-"nent defenders of the Trinity, Dr. *Waterland* "and

"and Dr. *Bennet*; and yet *both* of them plead "very ſtrenuouſly for ſubſcription to the Articles "in the ſenſe of the church; and *both* contend, "that their reſpective notions are exactly what "the church, and what the holy ſcriptures teach. "*Both* of them have the reputation of being or- "thodox. *Both* of them are afraid of colluſion, "diſingenuity, fraud, and evaſive arts in thoſe "who differ from each of them. — And yet, if "the meaning of the Articles be in ſuch a ſenſe "*one meaning*, that they can be ſubſcribed honeſtly "only by ſuch as agree in that one meaning, all, "or all but one, of thoſe great men, Biſhop *Bull*, "Doctors *Wallis*, *South*, *Sherlock*, *Bennet*, &c. "muſt have been guilty of theſe enormous "crimes [G]."

It behoved theſe Doctors then to contrive plans of ſubſcription to the Articles upon a larger bottom, ſuch at leaſt as might ſerve their own turn. But, as they were all irreproachably orthodox, it was an indiſpenſable part of their ſcheme to cramp and confine the heretics, in the ſame degree that they made room for themſelves. A circumſtance which reduced them to ſuch quibbles and diſtinctions, as have rendered their meaning extremely obſcure and diſputable.

Let us take two or three of the moſt ſtaunch and orthodox among them in their order, beginning with that celebrated champion of our church, the learned Dr. *William Nicholls*.

[G] Caſe of Subſcription to the thirty nine Articles conſidered, occaſioned by Dr. *Waterland's* Caſe of *Arian* Subſcription, p. 4.

"Theſe

"These Articles," says the Doctor, "could "not be designed to oblige all persons who are "to subscribe them, that they should agree in "every point of theology which is controverted "among divines [*H*]."

Probably not; because many points of theology have been controverted among divines, which are not mentioned in the thirty-nine Articles. But, with respect to *every* point of theology proposed in these Articles, I apprehend such agreement was designed.

"No," says the Doctor, "because the thing "is impossible." But what then? The impossibility of the thing is no proof that the compilers of our Articles did not *design* it. How did the Doctor know, but these fathers of our church might think the thing very possible? Or how shall *we* know what they did or did not *design*, but by their words and declarations? The compilers themselves tell us, that the design of the Articles was to avoid diversities of opinions. Dr. *Nicholls* comes 150 years after them, and affirms this could not be the design of them. Which of them is the credible evidence?

The Doctor is of opinion, "that some of these "Articles were purposely drawn up in general "terms, [*i. e.* in terms admitting several senses] "because they who compiled and first subscribed "them, were of different opinions."

"*Some* of these Articles."—We desire to know *which* of them? and how the Articles which were

[*H*] Commentary on the Articles, &c. p. 3. col. 1.

"purposely

purpoſely ſo drawn up, may be diſtinguiſhed from thoſe which were not? For the different ſentiments of thoſe who compiled and firſt ſubſcribed theſe Articles, if it prove any thing relative to the deſign of the Articles, will prove, that no leſs than the whole ſet were purpoſely drawn up in general terms, at leaſt if the Doctor has given us a true account of the men, to whoſe ſentiments they were to be accommodated. "Some of "them," ſays he, "learned their divinity from "the Fathers, without any relation had to the "doctrines of modern Divines. Some went up-"on the foot of *Luther's* and *Melancthon's* doc-"trine. Others were perfectly wedded to *Cal-"vin's* divinity, and perhaps not a little to his "form of church-diſcipline. Some were for a "*real*, though *undeterminable preſence* in the Eu-"chariſt; whilſt others thought Chriſt's body "was only there by figure and repreſentation." After which he goes on to aſk, "Can any one "ſay that theſe ſeveral perſons held no diverſity "of opinions?"

Rather, can any one ſay, that all theſe ſeveral perſons were agreed upon any one point, delivered in any one Article of the whole thirty-nine? And if none of them would agree to the paſſing ſuch Article or Articles, as excluded his or their own opinion; the probability is, that all and every of the Articles were purpoſely drawn up in general terms, as nothing leſs would make room for the heterogeneous opinions of ſuch a number of men, educated in ſo many different ſyſtems.

But

But mark how plain a tale will deſtroy this ſpecious hypotheſis. The articles were compiled by *Cranmer*, and at the moſt with the help of one or two of his particular friends. And theſe, out of all doubt, were all of a mind. They were then laid before the council, and by them approved, and ratified by the King. They were, finally, introduced into the convocation, not to receive any *ſynodical* authority there, but to be agreed to by ſubſcription. And let men's private opinions be what they would, when they were given to underſtand, that court-favour, and church-preferment would depend upon their compliance, we may judge in part, from what happens in our own times, that the diſſenters would not be the majority: which yet might poſſibly be the caſe, as it by no means appears, that the firſt ſubſcribers were all, or moſt of them, members of the convocation [*I*]. Dr. *Nicholls* ſuffered himſelf to be impoſed upon in this matter, by the fabulous account of *Peter Heylin*, a man loſt to all ſenſe of truth and modeſty, whenever the intereſts or claims of the church came in queſtion.

Well, but if the compilers made the matter ſo eaſy to men of all ſorts of opinions, ſubſcription would not give the church ſufficient hold of thoſe who are put to this teſt. This the doctor foreſaw, and therefore puts in his cautions in time.

[*I*] See the proofs of this collected together, in *An hiſtorical and critical Eſſay on the thirty-nine Articles*, &c. printed for Francklyn, 1724. Introduction, p. 2, 3.

" Men

" Men must not indulge *fanciful gloſſes*, or " wire-draw the words in the articles to *unreaſon-* " *able ſenſes*."

But if the caſe really is what the doctor hath repreſented it to be, I do not ſee how this is to be helped. Would not every *Calviniſt* among the firſt ſubſcribers, think the ſenſe of the *Arminian*, or (as they then were called) the *Freewiller*, an *unreaſonable ſenſe?* And if the article expreſſed the ſenſe of the *Calviniſt* naturally and plainly, would he not call the different ſenſe put upon it by the other party, *a fanciful gloſs?* The compilers, it is plain, have left us no criterion in this matter. And if the articles were left ſo open and indeterminate, as the doctor's ſcheme ſuppoſes, no man can pretend to ſay what *ſenſes* are *unreaſonable*; unleſs the doctor would have ſaid, that *all* ſenſes but his own, are unreaſonable, and then there is an end of *all* latitude.

" He thinks the force of King *James's* Decla- " ration, did not, nor was deſigned to extend far- " ther than his own time — and that, perhaps, " Biſhop *Burnet* might extend the rule of ſub- " ſcribing (in *any* literal grammatical ſenſe) he " drew from it, too far."

Biſhop *Burnet* might be to blame, for drawing a rule of acting, from a reſcript of no authority; but undoubtedly, if the articles were purpoſely drawn up in general terms, that is, ſo as to admit of a conſcientious ſubſcription by the men of all thoſe different opinions, the doctor has mentioned, the rule itſelf cannot poſſibly be extend-

ed

ed too far. Obſerve, however, that Biſhop *Burnet* knew of no authority, or foundation for this rule, but the King's Declaration. This *our* doctor, indeed, hath reprobated; but, however, we have no reaſon to complain of his abridging our liberty, as will appear by the following inſtance.

Biſhop *Burnet* had obſerved, that according to the form of ſubſcription preſcribed in the 36th canon, namely, "I ſubſcribe willingly, and *ex* "*animo*, the party ſubſcribing declared his own "opinion, or, in Dr. *Bennet's* language, declared "that he believed the articles to be true in *ſome* "ſenſe."

"But," ſays Dr. *Nicholls*, "tho' I am not al-"together different from his Lordſhip's judg-"ment in this matter, I am not ſo well ſatisfied "with the reaſon he grounds it upon. For *ex* "*animo* in that place, does not ſignifie, *according* "*to my opinion*, or, *as I firmly believe*, but *readily* "and *heartily*. For this form of ſubſcription is "not a form of ſubſcription to the thirty-nine "articles, but to the *three* articles contained in "that canon, which are not ſo much articles of "*opinion*, as of *conſent*, and the ſubſcription to "them declares, not what the ſubſcriber *believes*, "but what he *conſents to*."

Nicely diſtinguiſhed indeed! ſo, according to this caſuiſtry, a man may, by his ſubſcription, *conſent to* what he *does not believe*. For this being the only form of ſubſcribing the articles now in uſe, and the verbal declaration, profeſſing no more

more than *assent* and *consent* to the articles, we are no more bound, by our subscription, to *believe* the thirty nine articles to be true, than if they were so many propositions taken out of the *Koran*.

And yet, immediately afterwards, Dr. *Nicholls* says, "The subscriber *ought* to assent to *each* ar-"ticle, taken in the literal and grammatical "sense."—But why *ought* he? or what business has he with the *sense* of the articles, who may give such an assent and consent to them as does not imply belief?

But it is quite necessary to take these gentlemen, every one in his own way. Bishop *Burnet* had said, that men might conscientiously subscribe to any literal or *grammatical* sense, the words of an article would fairly bear; but he had not said, what was meant by *literal* and *grammatical* senses?

This fell to the share of Dr. *Nicholls*, by whom we are informed from *Grotius*, "that the gram-"matical sense is twofold, *sensus grammaticalis ab* "*origine*, and *sensus grammaticalis popularis*, the "latter of which only, is to be allowed in the "interpretation of any law, or writing; for, "continues the doctor, to take words in their "*first* original signification, which, by length of "time they have much varied from, may carry "them off to a sense very different from what "they were first intended; *therefore* the expres-"sions must be taken in the plain common sense "they

"they *are* generally uſed in, or were uſed in, at "the time of making ſuch law or writing."

The former part of this obſervation we readily allow. If the framers of a law, or a writing, make uſe of words in a ſenſe, different from the original grammatical ſenſe of ſuch words, it muſt be preſumed, that it is becauſe ſuch words have deviated, in popular uſe, to a ſenſe different from the original ſenſe. In which caſe, the ſenſe of the framers, or compoſers of ſuch law or writing, is to be adopted. But it will not *therefore* follow, that ſuch words or expreſſions are to be taken in the ſenſe they ARE NOW generally uſed in. Becauſe the popular grammatical ſenſe, in which ſuch words ARE GENERALLY USED NOW, may not be the ſame popular grammatical ſenſe, in which thoſe words were uſed, when the law or writing was made. In all ſuch caſes, we muſt recur to the ſenſe of the author or the lawgiver; or elſe the law or the writing cannot be underſtood; and the *modern* ſenſe of words may, in ſome caſes, carry us as far beſide the intention of the author or the lawgiver, as the *original ſenſe* would do.

For example; whatever the *original grammatical* ſenſe of the word *conſent* might have been, it is certain that the compilers of our articles meant by it, *a conſent of belief*, or *a perfect agreement of opinions*: and when ſubſcribers were afterwards required to give their *conſent* to the articles, there

can be no doubt but ſuch a conſent was intended, as is ſpecified in the title, namely, ſuch a *conſent* as was neceſſary for *the avoiding diverſities of opinions*.

Dr. *Nicholls*, on the other hand, finds, that *conſent* may now ſignifie a *conſent* of *acquieſcence* only, with which *opinions* and *belief* have little to do; and for this ſenſe he accordingly contends. But with the worſt luck in the world; for the thing, with reſpect to which this *conſent* is to be *eſtabliſhed*, happens to be TRUE RELIGION; and we may be pretty confident that the compilers never intended that a *conſent* in *true religion*, which did not imply belief and conviction, ſhould be accepted as ſufficient to anſwer the end of ſubſcribing the articles.

By the doctor's diſtinguiſhing grammatical ſenſes into *original* and *popular*, and forming his rule of interpretation upon that diſtinction, one would think, that the *grammatical* ſenſe of words, in any law or writing, could be but *one*. And yet he agrees with the Biſhop of *Sarum*, "that *ſeve-* "*ral* grammatical ſenſes may ſometimes very "fairly be put upon expreſſions in the articles." But if you may put both the *original* and *popular* ſenſe upon the *ſame* words, of what uſe is the diſtinction? or what ſenſe is there in his rule of interpretation?

If, indeed, as the doctor ſuppoſes, the compilers purpoſely drew up ſome of the articles in general terms, they undoubtedly left room to put *ſeveral grammatical* ſenſes upon the *ſame* words;

but then, how ſhall we know, which of theſe is the *popular* grammatical ſenſe, in which only the law (or, in this caſe, the article) is to be interpreted?

To ſolve this difficulty, the learned Doctor informs us, that "a Law is to be interpreted ac-"cording to the mind of the legiſlator; ſo that, "if the compilers of the Articles have expreſſed "themſelves obſcurely in any place, *that* is to "be explained, by what we find to have been "their avowed opinion, or by ſome other place "of their writings, or authentic books, where "they have expreſſed themſelves *clearly*."

But here it is evidently ſuppoſed, that the obſcurity in the article does not ariſe from the general terms in which it is *purpoſely* worded, but from ſome accidental inaccuracy of the compilers, whoſe avowed opinions, in their authentic books, are likewiſe ſuppoſed to be uniform, and conſiſtent with each other. Otherwiſe, nothing can be more perplexing to the party who wants to have the difficulty cleared up, than the expedient here recommended.

For example: According to the Doctor, ſome of the Articles are drawn up in general terms, on purpoſe to receive the different ſenſes which the compilers, who were of different opinions, might think fit reſpectively to put upon them. Hence ariſes an obſcurity of expreſſion, which the ſubſcriber to ſuch Articles wants to have cleared up. He conſults the authentic books of a *Lu-*

theran compiler, and there he finds the obſcurity cleared up, according to the ſyſtem *that* compiler had eſpouſed. But the *Calviniſt* compiler hath likewiſe written authentic books, of equal authority with thoſe of the *Lutheran*, and he unfolds the myſtery in a ſenſe juſt contrary to that given by the *Lutheran*. What ſhall the ſcrupulous and diſtracted ſubſcriber do in ſuch a caſe? or what expedient of elucidation ſhall he fall upon next?

But indeed what the good Doctor means, is only this, that, if you will allow him to point out the avowed opinions of the compilers, and to direct you to the authentic books you are to conſult, he will lead you out of all obſcurity, to a clear, conſiſtent ſenſe of an article, even though it ſhould be drawn up in terms ſufficiently *general*, to admit of an hundred different *grammatical* ſenſes.

This is plain from the inſtance he brings to illuſtrate his general doctrine above recited, which is too curious to be paſſed by. It is taken from the twenty-third Article, which ſays, *That we ought to judge thoſe lawfully called and ſent, which be called and choſen to this work* [of the miniſtry] *by men who have public authority given them in the congregation, to call and ſend miniſters.*

The plain, and, if you will, the *grammatical* meaning of which words is, that there is a public authority in every Chriſtian church, to appoint the particular perſons who are to miniſter in *that* church, excluſive of all others; and that they, and they only, who are ſo appointed, are lawfully called and ſent.

And

And yet, ſays Dr. *Nicholls*, "There can be no "doubt made, but that by *public authority* the "compilers meant the authority of Biſhops."

But, if no doubt can be made of this, what ſhall we ſay of thoſe compilers who *perhaps*, and of thoſe *firſt* ſubſcribers who *certainly*, were wedded to *Calvin's* form of church-diſcipline? "Can "any one ſay that they held no opinion *diverſe* "from this interpretation? or can any one think "that they would agree to the paſſing *this* Ar-"ticle, but that they thought it was conceived "in ſuch general terms, that they might ſub-"ſcribe it with a good conſcience, and without "equivocation?"

Theſe are Dr. *Nicholls's* own queſtions, and any one has juſt as much right to aſk them as he had.

Let us aſk another queſtion. Have any of the *Compilers* interpreted this Article as Dr. *Nicholls* has done? No. *Cranmer*, and his fellow-compilers of the Articles, (be they more or fewer) are well known to have held a friendly correſpondence with the great founders and ſupporters of other Proteſtant churches abroad; who had the misfortune (if it is one) to think there might be a *lawful* call to the miniſtry, without a Prelacy. It is even notorious, that the opinion of theſe foreign Divines was aſked by our Engliſh Reformers, concerning the methods they ſhould take in ſettling both matters of doctrine and diſcipline in their own church. And can it be ſuppoſed that *Cranmer* meant to ſay,

that the miniſters in theſe foreign *churches* had no *lawful calling*?

Dr. *Nicholls* himſelf well knew, they neither ſaid it, nor meant it. And therefore, inſtead of referring us to their *avowed opinions*, or their *authentic books*, as his poſition required he ſhould do, he appeals to a matter of fact, namely, "that "neither by the laws of the church, or by the "laws of the realm, any public authority *is* "*granted* to any other than Biſhops, to call or "ſend miniſters into the Lord's vineyard." As if the compilers conſidered only what was *lawful* in *this* reſpect by the *civil* conſtitution and *human* laws of *England*; or as if the Lord had no vineyard but in *Britain*.

But indeed, if we go back to the times of the compilers, the fact itſelf is not true. For, even ſo late as the 13th of *Eliz.* "every perſon under "the degree of a biſhop, which did or ſhould pre-"tend to be a prieſt or miniſter of God's holy "word and ſacraments, by reaſon *of any other* "*form of inſtitution, conſecration, or ordering*, than "the form ſet forth by Parliament, in the time "of the late King of moſt worthy memory, King "*Edward* VI. or [by any other form, than the "form] now uſed in the reign of our moſt gra-"cious ſovereign Lady,—" if he took care, before the Chriſtmas next enſuing the paſſing this Act, to qualify himſelf by ſubſcription, &c. as is therein directed, was deemed, by the eccleſiaſtical as well as the civil laws of the realm, to be ſuffi-

ciently

ciently *called* and *ſent*, to enjoy a benefice, and exerciſe the function of a miniſter of God's word and ſacraments, in the church of *England* itſelf. And there is no doubt but that hundreds, both in King *Edward's* and in Queen *Elizabeth's* reign, miniſtered in the church of England as *legal* Paſtors, who had no epiſcopal ordination; which would never have been ſuffered, if the doctrine either of the church or ſtate was what Dr. *Nicholls's* interpretation of this Article ſuppoſes it to have been.

If indeed you take the fact as Dr. *Nicholls* has ſtated it, and conſider the grounds and principles upon which it ſtands, it might perhaps turn out, that the Article cannot be conſcientiouſly ſubſcribed by any one, but a downright *Eraſtian*; which however I would leave to the determination of the judicious reader, after he has duly and ſeriouſly weighed the following honeſt remark of Biſhop *Burnet* upon this twenty-third Article.

"They who drew this Article," ſays his Lordſhip, "had the ſtate of the ſeveral churches be-"fore their eyes that had been *differently* reform-"ed; and although they had been leſs forced to "go out of the *beaten path* than any other, yet "they knew that all things *among themſelves* had "not gone according to thoſe rules, that ought "to be ſacred in regular times." And ſo, wanting grains of allowance themſelves, it was their buſineſs and their wiſdom to give them to others.

Turn we now to another church-champion of caſuiſtical memory, the famous Dr. *Bennet*, whoſe doublings and refinements upon the Articles are ſo various and intricate, that it would be an endleſs taſk to follow him through them all. A few of them may ſerve for a ſample of the ſpirit which poſſeſſeth thoſe, who undertake to defend human eſtabliſhments at all adventures.

It appears in Dr. BENNET's *Directions for ſtudying the thirty-nine Articles*, &c. publiſhed in 1714, that the ſaid Doctor was perfectly acquainted with the ſenſe of the church upon them all: which he accordingly opens to his young ſtudent, ſometimes contrary to the moſt obvious and natural import of the words. In one place, where he gives an interpretation of this ſort, he adds, "This was INFALLIBLY the meaning of "the compilers of our Articles, and they *muſt* be "underſtood in this ſenſe [*A*]."

Upon the *third* Article he ſays, "The church "excludes that ſenſe of the word *Hell*, which "ſays that by *Hell* is meant *The Grave*;" contrary to Biſhop *Burnet*, Dr. *Nicholls*, Dr. *Clarke*, and many more.

Upon the *ninth* he ſays, "The church does not "mean, that *original ſin* deſerves God's wrath "and damnation in infants which die before the "rational faculties exert themſelves;" and he ſays, "that they who believe and ſubſcribe the "Article in *this* ſenſe, believe and ſubſcribe *more* "than the church teaches or requires."

[*A*] Page 62. upon the ſixth Article.

Nota

Nota bene; The Article ſays in expreſs words, "*Original* (the title adds, *or birth*) *ſin*, deſerveth "God's wrath and damnation, *in every perſon* "*born into the world.*"

Upon the *eleventh* Article he obſerves, "that "our church's intention and doctrine about *Juſ-* "*tification by Faith*, are abundantly manifeſt, "though they are *unhappily worded.*" Which he explains by telling us, "that the church ex- "preſſed the real truth in St. *Paul's* own phraſe, "but in a ſenſe ſomewhat different from what "he [the Apoſtle] did moſt certainly intend "thereby."

Qu. How far may a man ſafely ſubſcribe *this* Article, as being *agreeable to the word of God?*

Upon the *thirteenth* Article, he ſays, "That "though the church makes uſe of the ſoftening "comparative words *yea rather*, and *we doubt* "*not but*, yet, the Latin word for *rather* being "*immo*, the church directly affirms, that works "done before the grace of *Chriſt* have the nature "of ſin."

The Doctor inquires, in another work, to *what edition* of the Articles we are obliged to ſubſcribe, by the act of the 13 *Eliz.* chap. 12 [*B*]? The Doctor determines for the *new Engliſh tranſlation*, to which Queen *Elizabeth's* ratification is annexed, and which, out of all diſpute, has the *ſoftening comparative* words. We are not obliged therefore, by the ſtatute above-mentioned, to

[*B*] Eſſay on the the thirty-nine Articles, chap. xxx.

take

take any notice of the word *immo*, although it carries along with it the church's *direct affirmation*.—But, to accumulate no more inſtances,

Upon the *ſeventeenth* Article, he ſays, "He "is ſo clear that the church condemns the notion "of *abſolute predeſtination* in her Liturgy, that, if "*that* was his notion, he could not ſubſcribe to "the *uſe* of the Liturgy. And with this the "Article *muſt be* conſiſtent." He ſhould have ſaid, "muſt be *made* conſiſtent;" for which edifying purpoſe, the Doctor hath taken a great deal of fruitleſs pains, to ſhew that the Article is in perfect agreement with *Arminius* upon the ſame ſubject.

From theſe particulars it appears, that, in the year 1714, Dr. *Bennet* was intimately acquainted with the ſenſe of the church, upon the obſcureſt and moſt ambiguous of the thirty-nine Articles, and accordingly communicated his diſcoveries with great freedom, and ſometimes ſo, that the literal import of the words of the Article was by no means favourable to his conſtruction. And where was the uſe or the pertinence of all his labour, if his young ſtudent was not given to underſtand by it, that he muſt ſubſcribe the Articles in theſe very ſenſes, excluſive of all others?

And yet, the very next year, *viz.* 1715, the very ſame Dr. *Bennet*, in the 35th chapter of his *Eſſay on the thirty-nine Articles*, in anſwer to *Prieſtcraft in Perfection*, undertaking to enquire

(by

(by what temptation infatuated does not appear) *what liberty the church allows to the ſubſcribers of the Articles?* anſwers, that "The church does not "reſtrain us to the belief of any one Article or "Propoſition, *in any particular ſenſe*, farther than "we are confined *by the words themſelves*." —— As much as to ſay, that, where the words do not confine us, the church has *no* particular ſenſe of her own. Contrary to his repeated interpretations in his *Directions*, where he over and over exhibits the church's ſenſe, againſt the confinement of the words themſelves; and contrary to his Majeſty's Declaration: for, ſhould the Doctor have been aſked, in what ſenſe men are allowed to ſubſcribe? muſt he not, to preſerve his ſelf-conſiſtency, have anſwered, "in any ſenſe of *our* "*own*, which we believe to be true, and which "the conſtruction of the words will admit of?"

When an Article or Propoſition," ſays the Doctor, "is fairly capable of two different "ſenſes, I would fain know who has power to "determine which is the church's ſenſe?"

When the Doctor wrote his *Directions*, &c. he thought he himſelf had this power; upon the ſuppoſition, I imagine, that the church had left no article or propoſition capable of *two different ſenſes*. If indeed ſuch articles or propoſitions are left *ambiguous*, and, particularly, if (according to Dr. *Nicholls*) they are ſo left of ſet purpoſe, I do not know who has any power to determine that the church, in ſuch articles or propoſitions, had *any* ſenſe at all.

be

Be it obſerved by the way, that Dr. *Bennet* perfectly ridicules Dr *Nicholls's* expedient of conſulting the writings of the compilers of the Articles, for the purpoſe of clearing up obſcurities in them. "For," ſays he, "did they write [their "books] by authority? or were all that lived in "their time of the ſame opinion? Might not "the Convocation themſelves differ as much as "the words [of the Articles] are capable of admitting?"

In the 33d chapter of the ſame *Eſſay*, the Doctor undertaking to prove, (and meaning to prove no more than) that they who ſubſcribe the Articles, are obliged to believe them true in *ſome* ſenſe; he hath brought arguments, which prove (if they prove any thing) that ſuch ſubſcribers are obliged to believe them not only true, but true in *one* and the *ſame* ſenſe, excluſive of all others; or which prove, that no propoſition in the Articles has more than *one* ſenſe. And thus Dr. *Bennet* is not only againſt Dr. *Nicholls*, as to the point of a conſent of acquieſcence, but againſt himſelf in the tenor of his whole 35th chapter.

1. He argues from the title of the Articles, "which," he obſerves, "ſhews them to be de-"ſigned to prevent *diverſities of opinions*. But if two or two hundred men ſubſcribe the ſame propoſition in different ſenſes, the *deſign* of the Articles is abſolutely defeated.

2. He argues from the words of a canon made in the Convocation of 1571, viz. *Ita tamen, ut*

prius

prius ſubſcribant Articulis Chriſtianæ Religionis, publice in Synodo approbatis, fidemque dent, ſe velle tueri et defendere DOCTRINAM EAM *quæ in illis continetur, ut* CONSENTIENTISSIMAM VERITATI VERBI DIVINI.

Now, if the compoſers of this canon, by *doctrinam eam*, meant more than *one* doctrine upon *one* ſubject, they expreſſed themſelves very ill, both as to grammar and ſenſe. If the wording of any propoſition admit of two or more doctrines or ſenſes different from each other, as Dr. *Bennet* allows to be fairly poſſible; and more eſpecially if (as Biſhop *Burnet* contends) thoſe doctrines may be literally and grammatically *contrary* to each other; how could they both or all be *defended* as *moſt agreeable to the divine word?* The church declares, ſhe herſelf may not, and therefore certainly would not ſuffer her ſons, to interpret ſcripture in a manner repugnant to itſelf. [*Art.* xx.] And what are ſubſcriptions in different ſenſes, upon the principles of this canon, more or leſs than this?

3. The Doctor argues from a judgment at Common Law, reported by Lord Chief Juſtice *Coke*, the ſubſtance of which is, "that if any "ſubſcription is allowed which admits diverſity "of opinions, (to avoid which was the ſcope of "the ſtatute 13 *Eliz.*) this Act touching ſub-"ſcriptions would be rendered of no effect."— The conſequence is plain. Two ſubſcribers to the ſame propoſition in two different ſenſes, are

of

of *divers* opinions. Admit this ſubſcription to paſs, and you render the Act *of none effect*.

In one word, whatever argument in this chapter does not prove that the Articles, and every propoſition in them, are to be believed by every ſubſcriber to be true in *one* and the *ſame* uniform, invariable ſenſe, does not prove that the ſubſcriber is obliged to believe them to be true in *any* ſenſe.

The ſum then of Dr. *Bennet's* atchievements upon the thirty-nine Articles, is this.

He hath proved, that the church of *England* has a particular ſenſe of her own upon every one of theſe Articles; which ſenſe, according to the Doctor, is ſometimes contrary to the natural import of the words.

He hath proved, that the church requires ſubſcribers to theſe Articles to believe them all, and every propoſition in them, to be true in *one* particular ſenſe.

And yet the ſame Dr. *Bennet* hath proved, that the ſame church of *England* hath no particular ſenſe of her own in thoſe Articles, where the words are capable of two different ſenſes, or no particular ſenſe which can be diſcovered; and conſequently that the Articles may be ſubſcribed in *any* ſenſe the conſtruction of the words will *fairly* admit of. Of which *fairneſs*, however, much may be ſaid by the ſubſcriber, to which the church perhaps would hardly agree.

Let us now ſee what we can make of Dr. *Nicholls* and Dr. *Bennet* in company.

Dr.

Dr. *Bennet* aſſerts, "that, though we ſubſcribe "the 35th Article, we don't ſubſcribe to the "Homilies. There is in reality," ſays he, "no "ſuch thing required of us, as a ſubſcription to "the Homilies. We muſt ſubſcribe the [35th] "Article, 'tis true, but not the Homilies."

But, according to Dr. *Nicholls*, the very ſame is the caſe with reſpect to the thirty-nine Articles themſelves. "The form of ſubſcription," quoth he, "is not a form of ſubſcription to the thirty-"nine Articles, but to the three Articles con-"tained in the thirty-ſixth Canon." "Therefore," to borrow Dr. *Bennet's* words, "there is in reality "no ſuch thing as a ſubſcription to the thirty-"nine Articles required of us." For the two caſes are exactly alike; and Dr. *Bennet's* reaſons for *his* aſſertion may, with equal force and propriety, be applied to the ſupport of Dr. *Nicholls's* propoſition. And now, if the ſcrupulous ſubſcriber is not made perfectly eaſy, he muſt be hard to pleaſe.

However, it is not adviſeable for him to depend too much on theſe Caſuiſts. 'Tis a ſlippery undertaking they have in hand; and I am afraid that Dr. *Bennet's* arguments on this head prove nothing but that he was in great concern to ſave his credit with the church, and at the ſame time to accommodate his young ſtudent, and perhaps himſelf, with certain convenient quibbles, when the occaſion ſhould call for them. However, he had great authorities on his ſide; no leſs than the eminent prelates *Laud* and *Burnet*.

The

The former ſays, that, "Tho' we [have] ſub-"ſcribed generally to the doctrine of the *Homi-*"*lies* as good, yet we did not expreſs, or mean "thereby, to juſtify or maintain every particu-"lar phraſe or ſentence contained in them."

By this latitude, his Grace got ſome ſhelter for the uſe of *Images* in churches; and for his diſſent from the *calviniſtical* explanations of *Grace*, *Juſtification*, &c.

Biſhop *Burnet* holds that, "All we profeſs "about them, [the Homilies] is only, that they "*contain a godly and wholeſome* doctrine. This, "ſays he, rather relates to the main importance "and deſign of them, than to every paſſage in "them."

It is not improbable, that his Lordſhip had ſome objection (as well he might) to ſome *paſ-ſages* in the *Homilies* againſt *willful rebellion*.

To theſe Dr. *Bennet* hath added the opinion of a *Nonjuror*, who ſays, "The *doctrine* of the "Homilies is the only thing we are obliged to "maintain, and not the *arguments* brought to "ſupport it."

But how, if the *doctrine* cannot be maintained without the arguments?———Thus we ſee one diſclaims an *unwholeſome phraſe* or *ſentence*, another diſlikes *a paſſage*, a third an *argument*; and when every one has made his particular exception, what may become of the poor Homilies, who can tell?

Dr. *Bennet* obſerves, that Archbiſhop *Laud*, Biſhop *Burnet*, the abovementioned Nonjuror, and himſelf,

himſelf, do exactly agree in the ſenſe of what the article ſays, touching the Homilies.

Give me leave to add another to the *groupe*, even the reſpectable *Minorite* FRANCIS SINCLAIR, *alias* DAVENPORT, who, upon this thirty-fifth article, thus deſcants:

Multa quidem ſunt in Homiliis laude digna. Alia nec nobis [Papiſtis *ſc.*] *vel* doctoribus eorum *arridٍent. Nec tenentur* Proteſtantes *ob hæc verba in Articulo, in ſingula* verba *vel* ſententias *Homiliarum jurare.*

Whether *Laud* took the hint from *Sinclair*, or *Sinclair* from him, is a point not worth conteſting: but I am greatly concerned to find Biſhop *Burnet* in ſuch company. However, it may be ſome excuſe for him, that he ſticks to the *main importance* and *deſign* of the Homilies; which, out of all diſpute, was to exclude and reprobate *Popery*.

But what? no advocate for the poor Homilies? Yes; here is one worth three dozen of *Lauds*, *Benuets*, or *Sinclairs*, the learned Biſhop *Barlow*.

"The church of *England*, ſays this worthy bi-"ſhop, has, in her Homilies (confirmed by acts "of parliament and convocation, and ſubſcribed "by all the clergy) declared the Pope to be *An-"tichriſt*. And then I deſire to know, whe-"ther they be true and obedient ſons of the "church of *England*, who publicly deny her "*eſtabliſhed* doctrines, which they had before "publicly ſubſcribed [*D*]."

[*D*] Genuine Remains, p. 161.

Would the reader know who the *ſons* of the church were, whoſe *truth* and *obedience* are thus called in queſtion? Even *Gilbert Sheldon*, Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*; and a much honeſter man, the painful and pious Dr. *Henry Hammond*.

But there is a third ſort of defenders of the church, who play faſt and looſe in this cauſe of the Homilies, and ſeem to have taken fees on both ſides.

Peter Heylin, having his objections to the ſtrict obſervance of the Lord's-day, as taught in the Iriſh Articles of religion, argues thus: "It is "contrary to the book of Homilies; and, if it "be contrary to the book of Homilies, it muſt be "alſo contrary to the book of Articles, by which "thoſe Homilies are approved and recommended "to the uſe of the church [*E*]."

And yet the ſame *Peter*, (the ********** of thoſe times, who was never at a loſs, nor ever incumbered with the leaſt *diffidence*) being preſſed with a queſtion from Archbiſhop *Uſher*, whether he admitted the two volumes of Homilies into his creed? replied, "That a man may ſo far take "the two volumes of the Homilies into his creed, "as to believe *as much of them* as is required of "him in the book of Articles. For he may very "warrantably and ſafely ſay, that he does verily "believe that the ſecond book of Homilies doth "contain a godly and wholeſome doctrine, and "neceſſary for thoſe times; that is to ſay," adds

[*E*] Heylin's *Reſpondet Petrus*, p. 130.

the

the Doctor, "the times in which they were *first* "published [F]."

That is to say, The second book of Homilies, considered as a book published to serve a present turn (as Bishop *Burnet* has it), is a good sort of book, and may be subscribed without a qualm.

This puts me in mind of a passage, where we are told of what use and in what repute the Homilies have been in these latter ages, after these our grandfathers were fallen asleep.

"As for the *Homilies*," says my author, "they "are good or bad, of undeniable authority, or "of none, just as they themselves (*churchmen* "about the year 1724) please. Those against "*rebellion* are particularly good against all tu-"mults, and disorders, and treasons, but *their* "*own*; and are to be urged home against the "men whom they dislike. But those against *your* "idolatry and antichristianism, and against many "of *your* doctrines, I assure your *Holiness*, are of "no account among the *same* men, but as the "warm, over-hasty efforts of ignorant zeal, in "the first Reformers; not fit to be urged against "any *true churchman* (any more than those of "the *Calvinistical* strain) since the time of Arch-"bishop *Laud* [G]."

[F] Heylin's *Respondet Petrus*, p. 130.

[G] Sir *Richard Steele's* (or rather Bishop *****'s) Letter to Pope *Clement* XI, prefixed to his Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion, &c. p. xxxvi.

I ſhall now diſmiſs Dr. *Bennet* with one parting remark upon a ſtriking paſſage in the xxxvth chapter of his *Eſſay*.

"I can't but think," ſays he, "that if a man "doubts of the ſenſe of his declaration, whether "it is ſuch as he *may* mean in the making of it, "he ought, in the preſence of GOD, to aſk his "conſcience this queſtion, *Do I verily think, that "if I were to acquaint my ſuperiors with it, they "would allow me to underſtand my declaration thus?* "I dare ſay the anſwer of his conſcience would "be a true reſolution of the doubt."

But, *I* dare ſay, the anſwer of his ſuperior's conſcience (which is one of the conſciences herein concerned) would be a *truer* reſolution of the doubt. And why ſhould he heſitate to acquaint his *ſuperior* with it; ſince he may do it, whenever he is obliged to *ſubſcribe* or *declare*, without going out of his way?—Perhaps the Biſhop might not approve of the *meaning*; in which caſe, he muſt either go without his preferment, or *declare* in a ſenſe he does *not* mean. Whereas the matter being tranſacted between the man and his conſcience, (which will bear to be debated with more freely than a Biſhop might allow) the *conſcience* may be brought over to the ſide of the MAN, and the doubt *commodiouſly* reſolved to the ſatisfaction of both parties.

"A man," ſays Dr. *Waterland*, "muſt have a "very mean opinion of the underſtanding or in-"tegrity of his ſuperiors, to ſuppoſe that they "ever can allow him to trifle at ſuch a rate, in ſo

"ſerious

" ſerious a matter as ſubſcription [*H*]."—That is, to preſume upon their conſent, to put a ſenſe of his own upon a diſputable Article.

And this gives me an opportunity of introducing *this* learned Doctor's opinions upon this important caſe, who having treated the ſubject *ex profeſſo*, in his well-known *Caſe of Arian Subſcription*, and the *Supplement* he wrote in defence of it, will carry us into a new field of controverſy, as he exhibits much curious matter, which fell not within the notice of Drs. *Nicholls* and *Bennet*.

Dr. *Waterland* profeſſes to ſet out where Dr. *Stebbing* and Dr. *Rogers* end. And theſe Doctors end " in confirming our excellent church in her " full power of requiring ſubſcription to *her own* " ſenſe of holy ſcripture [*I*]."

Now theſe interpretations, or this ſenſe of holy ſcripture, to which we are required to ſubſcribe, are the thirty-nine Articles of Religion, adopted by the church, as they were left by the compilers in 1562. The ſenſe, therefore, put upon the holy ſcriptures in theſe Articles by the compilers of them, is the ſenſe of the church.

" But," ſays Dr. *Waterland*, " the ſenſe of the " compilers, *barely conſidered*, is not *always* to be " obſerved, but ſo far only as the *natural* and " *proper* ſignification of words, or the intention " of the impoſers, binds it upon us [*K*]."

By the *impoſers*, I apprehend, muſt be meant the *miniſterial* impoſers, that is, the Biſhops, they

[*H*] Caſe of *Arian* Subſcription, p. 45. [*I*] Ibid. p. 7.
[*K*] Ibid. p. 11.

being the perſons appointed by law to take this ſecurity of ſubſcription, on behalf of the church.

But the Doctor was told "that the Archbi-"ſhops and Biſhops, or even the legiſlature itſelf "(without a new declaratory law), cannot deter-"mine what ſhall be the ſenſe of the doctrines "in the Articles [*L*]." And he was ſo far truly told. For the ſenſe of the Articles is already determined to be the ſenſe of the compilers, and no other; the declaration and ſubſcription to the Articles being enjoined by a law, which is nearly coæval with the compilers themſelves.

In this the Doctor found himſelf obliged to acquieſce; and, in his reply, "would not take up-"on him to determine what the Biſhops or the "Legiſlature might do [*M*]." — So that by this tergiverſation, the *natural* and *proper ſignification* of words, and the intention of the impoſers, are thrown quite out of the queſtion; and we are once more brought back to the ſingle ſenſe of the compilers. For, if the Biſhops may not alter the ſenſe of the Articles, in virtue of any power given them by the church, or even by the legiſlature; neither may the ſubſcriber, upon pretence of giving a *natural* and *proper* ſignification to the words.

"The ſenſe of the compilers and impoſers," ſays the Doctor, "where certainly known, muſt

[*L*] Caſe of Subſcription to the thirty-nine Articles, p. 32.
[*M*] Supplement, p. 41.

"be

" be religiously observed, even though the words " were capable of another sense [*N*]."

The sense of the imposers may be always certainly known, and consequently, according to the Doctor, must always be religiously observed. Which I mention (not that the imposers have any thing to do in the affair, but) to shew how by this proposition the Doctor abridged his own liberty, when it came to his turn to plead for it. The case is this: The Doctor says, " that diver- " sity of opinions is intended to be avoided with " respect to points determined [*O*]." Among *points determined*, the Doctor reckons the doctrine of the Trinity. But, pleading for a liberty to subscribe the seventeenth and other Articles in an *Arminian* sense, he considers *these* points as *undetermined*.

Whereas, by taking in the sense of the imposers, the meaning of the Articles is determinable in *all* points; because the sense of the imposers may be *always* certainly known, whatever the sense of the compilers may be.

" The Article in the Apostles Creed concern- " ing Christ's descent into *Hell*, is now universally " understood in a sense probably different from " what the compilers of the Creed intended," says the learned Dr. *Clarke*.

" However that be," replies Dr. *Waterland*, " one thing is certain, that our church hath left " that article at large, intending a latitude; and

[*N*] Case of Arian Subscription, p. 11.
[*O*] Ibid.

" indulging a liberty to ſubſcribers to abound in " their own ſenſe [P]."

Here, if you leave out the intention of the *impoſers*, one thing is certain, that no latitude is left to the ſubſcriber of the Article; the words *hell* and *inferi* never ſignifying any thing in the days of the compilers, but the place of torment. If the intention of the impoſers is taken into the account, another thing is certain, that no liberty is allowed to ſubſcribers to abound in their own ſenſe, unleſs, having deſerted the ſenſe of the compilers, they abſolutely neglect the intention of the impoſers, which may always be certainly known.

Dr. *Waterland* indeed tries to ſalve all this by ſaying, " that the ſenſe of the compilers and im- " poſers may generally be preſumed the ſame " (except in ſome very rare and particular ca- " ſes [Q]."

Well then, may the impoſers, in any of theſe *rare* and *particular* caſes, go againſt the *known*, or even the *preſumed* ſenſe of the compilers? If they may, the Doctor ſhould have told us how they came by their authority; and why the impoſers may not, upon equally good grounds, deſert the compilers in caſes neither *rare* nor *particular*? Beſides, *one* impoſer may think *that* a *rare* and *particular* caſe, which to another is not ſo. A third impoſer may have *his rare* and *particular* caſes, different from them both; and ſo a fourth

[P] Caſe of Ar. Subſcr. p. 35. [Q] Ibid. p. 11.

and

and a fifth, till the ſenſe of the compilers is thrown quite out of doors in *every* caſe.

Dr. *Waterland*, in particular, had *rare* and *particular* caſes of his own, upon which he acts the part of an *impoſer* with no ill grace.

Of the articles relating to the Trinity, the Doctor ſays, " their ſenſe is fixed, and bound " upon the conſcience of every ſubſcriber, by the " plain, natural ſignification of the words, and " by the known intent of the compilers and im- " poſers [*R*]."

But of the damnatory clauſes in the *Athanaſian* creed, he ſays, " that the compilers ſenſe " being doubtful, and the impoſers having left " thoſe clauſes without any expoſition, the ſub- " ſcriber is at liberty to underſtand them in ſuch " ſenſe as the words will bear, and ſuch as beſt " anſwers the main intent and deſign of that " creed; and is moſt agreeable to ſcripture and " reaſon [*S*].

The ſenſe of the articles, ſays the Doctor, concerning the Trinity, is fixed and certain. Who has fixed it? Not the *compilers*, otherwiſe than by expreſſing the propoſitions relating to the Trinity, in terms which accorded with their own ideas. And has the *compiler* of the Athanaſian creed, done either more or leſs, with reſpect to the damnatory clauſes? — On another hand, the *impoſers* have left thoſe clauſes without

[*R*] Caſe of Ar. Subſcription, p. 36.

[*S*] Ibid. p. 37.

any

any *expoſition*. And where, I pray, is their expoſition of the articles relating to the Trinity, to be met with?

"This inſtance, continues the Doctor, is no-"thing parallel to the caſe of the Articles con-"cerning the Trinity; whoſe ſenſe is fixed and "certain as before ſaid."

That is to ſay, "The ſubſcriber is NOT at "liberty to underſtand theſe Articles in ſuch "ſenſe, as the words will bear; or in ſuch ſenſe, "as beſt anſwers the main intent and deſign of "the whole ſet of Articles, or in ſuch ſenſe as is "moſt agreeable to ſcripture and reaſon." For in theſe circumſtances, according to the Doctor, conſiſts the ſpecific difference, between the caſe of ſubſcribing the damnatory clauſes in the Athanaſian creed, and the caſe of ſubſcribing the Articles concerning the *Trinity*. — And thus, kind reader, "is our excellent church confirmed in "her *full power* of requiring ſubſcription to HER "OWN SENSE of Holy Scripture."

The Dr. proceeds. "Fix, in like manner, "the ſenſe of the damnatory clauſes; and it "ſhall ſoon be proved that every ſubſcriber "ought to acquieſce in it."

Having ſo good encouragement, let us try what we can do.

Whoſoever will be ſaved, it is neceſſary, before all things, that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without

doubt

doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly. And the catholic faith is this.

Then follows the doctrine of the Trinity, expreſſed in the articles of the creed, whoſe ſenſe, the Doctor ſays, is *fixed* and *certain*, &c. as above. After which we have ſome more of theſe clauſes, *He therefore that will be ſaved muſt thus think of the Trinity.* And, at the cloſe of all, *This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be ſaved.*

Now what is the *plain, natural* ſignification of theſe words? The common ſenſe of the ſubſcriber anſwers, "that you ſhall periſh everlaſtingly," if you don't believe the Athanaſian doctrine of the Trinity, *conceptis verbis.*

"No ſuch thing, ſays the Doctor, the words "are not fixed and certain; this is an unrea-"ſonably rigorous ſenſe of them."—Well, what is then be done? Will the learned Doctor help us to a more commodious ſenſe? No, but he will tell you how you may help yourſelf to one.

"Let any man ſhow, ſays he, what ſenſe it "is moſt reaſonable to underſtand them in; "and the ſame reaſons (if *good*) ſhall ſerve to "ſhow that *that* was the ſenſe of the compiler."

We thank you, good Doctor, and will now make uſe of your expedient.

It is *reaſonable* then *to ſuppoſe*, that a warm dogmatical man, heated by controverſy and oppoſition, who was preſumptuous enough to lay down

down points of artificial Theology, as articles of faith, without any ſupport from ſcripture, might have the aſſurance to conſign all men to damnation, who did not believe his doctrines; having probably no other way to procure them to be received.

"No, ſays Dr. *Waterland*, your reaſons are *not* "good. The creed was written and received "in an *enlightened* and *knowing* age, and conſe- "quently by a perſon of great accuracy and "ſolid judgment, who had his information from "ſcripture; and to whom no paſſion or pre- "judice ought to be imputed."

Be it ſo; and let us go another way to work. The ſenſe of this creed, and the ſenſe of the Articles concerning the Trinity, is one and the ſame; and is a fixed and certain ſenſe. May a man then *diſbelieve* this ſenſe? or put *a ſenſe of his own* upon the creed or the articles, and *not* periſh everlaſtingly?—If, yea, I doubt this *fixed* ſenſe, whatever it may be as to its *catholiciſm*, will not turn out to be the true chriſtian faith, on the belief of which the ſcriptures ſay, everlaſting life doth abſolutely depend.

Dr. *Waterland* might rail againſt *prevarication*, as long, and as *loudly* as he pleaſed; but I am very much miſtaken, if he had not as much occaſion for it, as any of his opponents.

But

But doctors differ; and even ſome of the *orthodox* have refuſed this gracious liberty of ſubſcribing the damnatory clauſes, in a *commodious* ſenſe.

Dr. *Edmund Calamy*, had ſaid, in one of his *Defences of moderate Nonconformity*, "that though "the 8th Article intimates, that the Athanaſian creed ought thoroughly to be received, "yet it does not neceſſarily follow, that it takes "in the *Appendages*; and I may thoroughly re"ceive the ſubſtance of the creed, *ſaid he*, and "yet abhor the damnatory clauſes."

"That is, replied Mr. *Johnſon* of *Cranbrook*, "by ſubſcribing the whole creed, I meant only the "*middle*, and not *both ends*. And, by parity of "reaſon, other men may ſubſcribe to *both ends*, "and not to the middle [*T*]."

"Strange, ſays Mr. *Johnſon*, that ſuch men as "theſe, ſhould make conſcience of ſubſcribing "the liturgy, when, upon ſuch principles, they "may ſubſcribe the Maſs-book."

I am of opinion that this reflection concerned Dr. *Waterland* as much within a trifle, as Dr. *Calamy*.

"I know, ſays Dr. *Waterland*, many have "ſtrained the *damnatory* clauſes to an unreaſon"able rigour, on purpoſe to diſparage the "creed."—That is, many have affirmed that the ſenſe of theſe clauſes is as *fixed*, *certain*, and *poſitive*, as the ſenſe of the creed itſelf. Mr.

[*T*] Clergyman's *Vade Mecum*. Vol. ii. 121, 122.

Johnſon

Johnſon is one of theſe; but had it been required, I would have been Mr. *Johnſon's* compurgator, that he had no purpoſe to diſparage the creed.

To prove his doctrine of *fixed* and *unfixed* ſenſes, Dr. *Waterland* informs us, that "a diſtinction ſhould be made, between ſuch Articles as being formed in general terms, leave a latitude for private opinions, and ſuch as, being otherwiſe formed, leave no ſuch latitude [*U*]."

Here the Doctor was called upon for his *criteria*, by which ſuch different formations might be diſtinguiſhed from each other; "otherwiſe, his opponent inſiſted, the liberty might be extended to every propoſition in each Article, which is capable of ſeveral ſenſes [*W*]."

To which the Doctor replied, "Any certain indication of the impoſers meaning, is a *criterion* to fix the ſenſe of a propoſition. When there are neither plain words, nor any other certain indication of the impoſer's meaning, the Article, ſo far, is left at large, and the point left undetermined [*X*]."

Surely this *impoſer* cannot be the Biſhop who takes the ſubſcription: for every man may have a certain indication of the Biſhop's meaning before whom he ſubſcribes, if the Biſhop has the uſe of

[*U*] Caſe of Arian ſubſ. p. 39. 40.
[*W*] Caſe of Subſcription, p. 9.
[*X*] Supplement, p. 30.

ſpeech

ſpeech to convey it. The Doctor too has acknowledged in this very pamphlet, that Biſhops, for ought he knows, may have no power to aſcertain the ſenſe of the Articles. Who or what then is this phantom of an *impoſer*? And whither muſt we go for his meaning?

When Dr. *Waterland* allows, that there is a latitude left for private opinion in ſome caſes, and when he ſuppoſes, that ſome Articles are left at large, and ſome points undetermined; he ſhould ſeem to mean, *ſo* left at large, and *ſo* undetermined, as to admit of *different*, and even *contradictory* opinions and ſenſes.

For example, the opinions of the *Arminians* and *Calviniſts*, concerning conditional and abſolute decrees, are contradictory opinions. If then both ſubſcribe the ſeventeenth Article, and each in his own ſenſe, they muſt give it two inconſiſtent and contradictory ſenſes.

Again; the opinions of Dr. *Waterland* and Dr. *Bennet*, the one holding the proceſſion of the Holy Spirit (propoſed in the *fifth* Article) to be *eternal*, the other, only *temporal* [Y], ſeem to be opinions flatly contradictory to each other. Would not Logicians ſay, that to predicate *finite* and *infinite* of one and the ſame ſubject, is a contradiction? Moreover Dr. *Waterland* thought (and indeed ſo think I) that the church has determined the point for *him*. Whereas Dr. *Bennet* would not

[Y] Caſe of Arian Subſ. p. 30.

allow,

allow, that the church had determined either way.

Would any man now ſuſpect, that the *Calviniſts* and *Arminians* ſubſcribed the *ſeventeenth* Article; and the Doctors *Waterland* and *Bennet* the *fifth*, in one and the ſame ſenſe reſpectively?

Yet this is what Dr. *Waterland* undertook to prove. "Both, ſays he, ſubſcribe to the ſame "*general* propoſition, and both in the ſame ſenſe; "only they differ in the *particulars* relating to "it; which is not differing (AT LEAST IT NEED "NOT BE) about the ſenſe of the Article, but "about particulars *not* contained in it."

He inſtances in the *ſeventeenth* Article. "Imagine the Article to be left in general terms. "Both ſides may ſubſcribe to the ſame general "propoſition, and both in the ſame ſenſe; "which ſenſe reaches not to the particulars in "diſpute. And if one believes predeſtination "to be *abſolute*, and the other *conditionate*, this "is not (on the preſent ſuppoſition) differing "about the ſenſe of the Article, but in their re-"ſpective additions to it."

To this I anſwer,

1. That in the preſent caſe theſe *general terms*, have *particular ideas* fixed to them by the reſpective ſubſcribers, and conſequently, if theſe are *different* or *oppoſite ideas*, the terms muſt be ſubſcribed, in *different* or *oppoſite* ſenſes: which, in this preſent caſe, reaches ſo materially to the particulars

ticulars in diſpute, that the *Calviniſt* has no idea of any *predeſtination* which is *not* abſolute.

2. Though this ingenious neutrality of the *ſeventeenth* Article *might* ſerve the turn of the *Calviniſts* and *Arminians*, yet it cannot, upon Dr. *Waterland's* principles, be applied to the difference between Dr. *W.* and Dr. *Bennet*. For here, according to one ſide, the church hath *determined*. Determined what? Why concerning a *particular* not contained in the Article. For, according to Dr. *Bennet*, the church never once "adds the epithet *eternal* to the word proceſ-"ſion." The church then, determines concerning terms *not* contained in the Article, as well as concerning thoſe that are.

3. Upon this ſcheme of unity Dr. *Waterland* and the Arians, ſubſcribed in one and the ſame ſenſe. "They all ſubſcribed the ſame general "terms, which contain the ſame general ſenſe. "They differed indeed about their reſpective ad-"ditions to the ſenſe of the Articles; but not a-"bout the ſenſe of the Article itſelf.

No ſuch thing, ſays Dr. *W.* "The propoſitions "concerning the H. Trinity, contained in our "public forms, are not general or indefinite, but "ſpecial and determinate, in the very points in "difference between Catholics and Arians, "[*viz.*] conſubſtantiality, coequality, coeternity, "&c. and that in as clear and ſtrong words as "any can be deviſed."

We ſhall ſee in the next chapter, that ſome of theſe *ſpecial* and *determinate* propoſitions concerning the Trinity, in our public forms, may be taken in *four* different ſenſes. In the mean time, ſuffice it to obſerve, that the Calviniſts are as poſitive for the *ſpecial* and *determinate* ſenſe of the ſeventeenth Article, as this Doctor is for that of the Trinitarian forms. They tell you, that for the deſcription of the ſtate of a man, conſigned by a divine decree to an inevitable lot, excluſive of all conditions, no ſtronger, clearer or more preciſe word can be deviſed, than *Predeſtination*; and that it is abſurd, and contradictory, to talk of *divine* decrees controulable by contingent conditions, which would make them to differ nothing from *human* decrees. And is there, in very deed, any greater abſurdity in qualifying the words *conſubſtantiality*, *coequality*, &c. with ſuch epithets, as ſuppoſe they need not be applied to different Beings, ſo as to imply that thoſe Beings are in all poſſible reſpects *abſolutely* ſuch? If ſuch qualification may be admitted *in any one reſpect*, the propoſitions abovementioned are not ſpecial and determinate, any more than the propoſitions concerning Predeſtination.

Thus we ſee, Dr. *Waterland*, by opening a door for his own *Arminian* ſubſcription, unwarily let in the *Arians* at the ſame entrance, who would not be turned out, for all he could ſay to them. And indeed, if there is prevarication on *one* ſide, it cannot be helped; it is the ſame caſe on the

other.

other. There muſt be the ſame latitude allowed to *both*, or to *neither*.

It is indeed ſurprizing that Dr. *Waterland*, who very well knew that ſubſcription to the Articles, is not a term of lay-communion, but of miniſterial acceptance; or, in other words, a condition upon which miniſterial truſts and priviledges are conferred, ſhould admit of the leaſt latitude in ſubſcriptions. For what are theſe miniſterial truſts? Is not one of them a truſt to preach the word of God, according to the interpretation of the church of *England*, ſpecified in the xxxix Articles? If theſe interpretations are exhibited in theſe Articles in terms ſo general, as to admit of different ſenſes, how ſhall any man be able to execute this truſt, till he ſhall be informed which of theſe ſenſes is the ſpecific doctrine of the church of *England*? If the compilers of the Articles, on the other hand, intended that two men, might raiſe two different doctrines, from one and the ſame propoſition in the Articles, of what uſe was this teſt? Or where was the common ſenſe of eſtabliſhing it? The truth of the caſe then, is juſt as the Biſhop of *Briſtol* * hath ſtated it, in his noted ſermon on ſubſcriptions. "Every one," ſays his Lordſhip, "who ſubſcribes the Articles "of Religion, does thereby engage, not only "not to diſpute or contradict them; but his "ſubſcription amounts to an appprobation of, "and an aſſent to the truth of the doctrines "therein contained, in the very ſenſe [in] which

* Dr. *Conybeare*.

"the compilers are ſuppoſed to have underſtood "them." And accordingly his Lordſhip, very conſiſtently (with what *ſolidity* is another queſtion), defends the church of *England*, in the exerciſe of her *right*, to obtrude her own interpretations of ſcripture upon her Miniſters, to the excluſion of all others.

The ſtaunch champions of the church of *England* know perfectly well that this is a true repreſentation, both of the original intention of the church, and the actual intention of the law. And accordingly, foreſeeing that it might be objected, that this power of fixing and obtruding her own interpretations of ſcripture upon her ſons, is rather more than a *proteſtant* church ought to pretend to, they have prepared an anſwer, which, upon the ſuppoſition of ſuch a latitude, as is contended for, would be utterly impertinent.

Here, ſay they, is no *inquiſition*, no compulſion in the caſe. The church of *England* compels no man to ſubſcribe. They may let it alone, if they pleaſe. "All the buſineſs is, ſays the merciful "Dr. *Stebbing*, we cannot admit you to the office "of public teachers [Z]." And a bad buſineſs enough of all conſcience, if, by this *non-admiſſion*, many an honeſt pious and learned man is reduced to ſtarve: which has been the caſe with ſome, and, but for this happy invention of a *latitude*, would have been the caſe with with a great many more.

[Z] *Rational inquiry*, p. 39.

But

But, by Dr. *Stebbing's* leave, this is not *all* the buſineſs. For, when the church hath turned the poor man adrift, it may be, ſome body might take him in, if he could but give a good reaſon why he did not comply with the church. In theſe caſes, no reaſon is comparable to the *true* one: which would be, that he could not in conſcience ſubſcribe the xxxix Articles, as he did not believe them to be agreeable to the word of God. But here the church lays her hands on him with a vengeance. For by uttering an excuſe to this effect, he incurrs excommunication *ipſo facto*; that is (according to *Lyndwood*) *nullo hominis miniſterio interveniente*; and is not to be reſtored, but only by the Archbiſhop.

By this excommunication, the courteous reader may be pleaſed to know, that *no more* happens to the unhappy mortal, than that he is deprived of the communion; his perſon ſequeſtered from the converſation and ſociety of the *faithful* (meaning all who are *not* excommunicate); and if his conſcience ſhould not become more tractable within forty days, he may be committed to priſon by the King's writt *de excommunicato capiendo*,— where he muſt lie and rot till he recants; for the Archbiſhop himſelf cannot abſolve him, till after *repentance* and *revocation* of his *wicked error*.

All this while, the church of *England compels no man to ſubſcribe!* That is to ſay, ſhe does not force the pen into his hand, and oblige him to ſign his name *à coups de baton*. But — let us bleſs God for

for the lenity of the *civil* Magiſtrate; "who, as "the rev. Mr. *Jortin* obſerves, is of excellent uſe "in preventing us from doing one another any "*bodily harm.*" For, that the church of *England* is at all out of conceit with any part, either of her doctrine or diſcipline, does by no means appear by ſome late public indications of her judgment herein [*A*].

Thus ſtands the real naked fact, and pityable enough it is to make men glad of any ſubterfuges and expedients of latitude, even thoſe narrow ones of Dr. *Waterland*. But, alas! we ſee by the conceſſions the Doctor himſelf was obliged to make, that we are of courſe brought back to the ſingle ſenſe of the compilers; the only ſenſe indeed, eſpouſed by, or legally authenticated in the church of *England*. An hard neceſſity upon ſo orthodox a ſon of the church, either to be obliged to prevaricate with the naughty *Arians*, or to be diſowned by his venerable mother, as none of her legitimate offspring.

"If inſtead of excuſing a fraudulent ſubſcri-"ption, ſays the Doctor, on the foot of human "infirmity, (which yet is too ſoft a name for it) "endeavours are uſed to defend it upon princi-"ple, and to ſupport it by rules of art; it concerns "every honeſt man to look about him. For "what is ſo vile and ſhameful but may be ſet "off with falſe colours, and have a plauſible turn

[*A*] See the convocation's Addreſs, 1754, where it is hinted, that *the church of* England *hath no equal.*

"given

"given it, by the help of quirks and and ſubtil-"ties [*B*]."

I have the misfortune to think, that this wiſe reflection concerned Dr. *Waterland*, no leſs than thoſe for whoſe more immediate uſe he intended it. All of them were made ſore by ſubſcription. All of them wanted, and all of them applied the plaiſter of quirks and ſubtilties, in their turn.

A man of principle will never be driven to make uſe of quirks and ſubtilties, till he finds himſelf bound to ſome unreaſonable and unrighteous conditions. And they who deſire ſuch quirks and ſubtilties ſhould not be made uſe of, ſhould be careful, not to lay ſnares, or ſtumbling blocks in the way of honeſt men, that they may be under no temptation to prevaricate.

A good and conſcientious Chriſtian in matters of practice, can do little harm by his miſtaken opinions. If they have no evil influence upon his own life and converſation, others cannot be far miſled by them. And it is a very poſſible caſe, that ſuch a one may be a more edifying teacher, with reſpect to thoſe points which are of the utmoſt importance, and concerning which few men are liable to err, than he who is warmed with the moſt ſublimed ſpirit of orthodoxy.

Let ſuch a one alone to follow his conſcience, and he will be ſincere, faithful and diligent in diſpenſing the word of God, according to his beſt information. But if you have a mind to make a knave of him, you cannot take a more effectual

[*E*] Caſe, &c. p. 4.

method, than to contrive teſts for his diſputable opinions, with which he cannot comply without quirks and ſubtilties; and with which, if he does not comply, you deprive him of the means of getting his bread, in the only way he is qualified to earn it.

Upon the whole; we have now ſeen that every ſyſtem of latitude is, in ſome particular or other, exceptionable to every one, but the particular perſon who invents it for his own uſe. It is not poſſible this ſhould be the caſe, if the compilers of the Articles had really intended *any* latitude, or the laws concerning ſubſcription had left room for it. Biſhop *Burnet* plainly ſaw that ſubſcribers were bound to the ſingle ſenſe of the compilers before *His Majeſty's Declaration* was iſſued, which by the ſaid Biſhop, was underſtood to admit of ſubſcription in *any* literal and grammatical ſenſe, even though it ſhould be different from, and even contradictory to *another* literal and grammatical ſenſe.

But, ſays Dr. *Waterland*, — "His [Majeſty's] "order is, that every ſubſcriber ſubmit to the "Article in the *plain and full meaning thereof*, in "the *literal and grammatical ſenſe*. What? is "the *plain* and *full* meaning, more than *one* mean-"ing? or is the *one plain* and *full* meaning, *two* "*contradictory* meanings? Could it be for the "Honour of the Article, or of the King to ſay "this? No —."

And

And ſo there's an end of Biſhop *Burnet's* ſcheme of Latitude, as it reſts upon this Declaration. But then, Dr. *Waterland* could work another ſcheme out of it for his *own uſe*, by making the *plain* and *full* meaning, to ſignify a *general* meaning, excluſive of *all particular ſenſes*; — till, wanting to plague and ſtarve the *Arians*, he found out, that the ſenſe of the Articles relating to the *Trinity*, was *not general*, but *ſpecial*, *particular*, and *determinate*.

If the ſubject were not too ſerious, one might find abundant matter of mirthful entertainment, in the *quirks* and *ſubtilties* of theſe eminent Doctors. But ſhould we laugh at them, no doubt but we ſhould be told, that we wounded the church and religion through their ſides. We ſhall therefore content ourſelves with recommending to them to conſider, how far this ridiculous ſelf-contradicting caſuiſtry may have been inſtrumental in giving diſſenters a contemptible opinion of our church and her diſcipline, and in making our holy religion itſelf (though in reality it has nothing to do, either with the caſuiſts or the caſuiſtry) the ſport and ſcorn of infidels.

I do not doubt, but ſome perſons will be curious know, how it was poſſible for men ſo famous in their generation, who were ſo learned, judicious, and penetrating in other things, and who all thought they were driving the ſame nail, to be ſo contradictory and inconſiſtent, not only with each other, but even with themſelves? Let

ſuch

ſuch curious inquirers know then, that all theſe experienced workmen were endeavouring to repair, and *daub with untempered mortar*, certain *ſtrongholds* and *partition walls*, which it was the deſign of the Goſpel to throw down and to level. An attempt of this ſort could hardly be more agreeable to the Divine will, than the building at *Babel*. And no marvel that the *Craftſmen* ſhould meet with the like ſucceſs. That is to ſay, that their language ſhould be confounded, and rendered unintelligible both to each other, and to all who are otherwiſe concerned to underſtand it.

It is true theſe particular Doctors, are all gone off the ſtage. But they have left plenty of diſciples behind them, who affect to ſpeak the jargon of their reſpective maſters. And it is certain, that, while our ſubſcriptions continue upon the preſent footing, there will be no end of *accuſing* on one ſide, or of *recriminating* on the other. Let us, at length, come to ſome temper with each other, and, if a form of words cannot be agreed upon, which every Chriſtian miniſter may ſubſcribe willingly, and with a good conſcience, let us join in a petition to the legiſlature, that the expedient propoſed, not long ago, in one of our *Monthly* pamphlets, may receive the ſanction of law; namely that the affair of ſubſcription ſhould henceforth be conſidered in no other light, than as *An Office of inſurance for our reſpective preferments*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A particular Examination of the Sentiments and Reaſonings of thoſe Writers who have pleaded for a Latitude in ſubſcribing to the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England, *upon the Suppoſition that every Proteſtant Church muſt act conſiſtently with its profeſſing to aſſert and maintain Chriſtian Liberty.*

I Am now entering, not without regret, upon the moſt diſagreeable part of my undertaking, namely, that of declaring, and giving reaſons for my diſſatisfaction with ſuch arguments, as the ſons of *truth* and *liberty* have offered, by way of juſtifying their compliance with the church in this demand of ſubſcription to her Liturgy and Articles.

When we conſider the irreſiſtible force and perſpicuity of that reaſoning, by which ſome of theſe worthies (when debating the queſtion concerning church-power in the abſtract) have demonſtrated the unreaſonableneſs of that demand, as well as the inconſiſtency of it with the profeſſions of every Proteſtant church, one cannot but lament, that, to the laurels they gained in that diſputation, they did not add the glory of becoming confeſſors to their own principles, and of rather declining the affluence of a plentiful income,

income, or the figure of a ſuperior ſtation, than accept of theſe emoluments on conditions, which muſt have been impoſed upon them with ſome violence to their inclinations.

It is true, ſome of theſe have ſaid, that "the "reaſonableneſs of conformity to the church of "*England* is perfectly conſiſtent with the rights "of private judgment [*A*]." But they muſt only mean, of *their own* private judgment. For it is well known, that others who diſſent from the church of *England*, are clearly juſtified in ſuch diſſent, upon thoſe very principles which theſe *conforming* writers have laid down; and conſequently, the *nonconformity* of the *one* is juſt as *reaſonable* as the *conformity* of the *other*. On the other hand, it is equally well known, that the moſt eminent and ſucceſsful defenders of our church-eſtabliſhment, are *they* who have attacked theſe principles of liberty, and have proceeded upon the ſuppoſition that the private judgment of individuals ought to give way to the authority of the church; being well aware that, if theſe theories of Chriſtian liberty are allowed to ſtand upon a firm foundation, it would be impoſſible to vindicate the church of *England*, with reſpect to the particulars of her conſtitution. And therefore I muſt own, I never could ſee how the authors and defenders of theſe theories could make their conformity conſiſtent with the enjoyment

[*A*] Dr. *Sykes's* Anſwer to *Rogers's* Viſible and Inviſible Church of Chriſt, p. 6.

of

of their rights of private judgment, otherwiſe than by ſuppoſing that it might be *reaſonable* for them to ſubmit to conditions, which it is *unreaſonable* in the church to impoſe.

In the mean time, their adverſaries have long and loudly accuſed them of prevarication, in complying with the church; which, whether the accuſation be juſt or not, has certainly taken much from the influence they might have had, both with the true friends of Chriſtian liberty, and the partial and prejudiced retainers to church power. On which account it has been a great misfortune to the preſent generation, and will be a greater to the next, that theſe gentlemen did not ſtand aloof a little longer, till they had tried at leaſt what conceſſions the church would have made them, rather than have wanted their ſervices, which, under all diſadvantages, have been ſo great an honour and an ornament to her.

What might not the firmneſs of an *Hales* and a *Chillingworth* formerly, or more lately of a *Clarke* or an *Hoadley*, have obtained for us by this time? Which of us all, abuſed and vilified as theſe men have been, by bigots of different claſſes, would have wiſhed to have ſeen them in another communion? And who is he that will affirm, the church eſtabliſhed has loſt nothing by depriving theſe champions of the power of adding to their victories over the ſpiritual tyranny of Rome, a complete and ſolid vindication of her own doctrine, diſcipline, and worſhip?

But

But that day is paſt and gone beyond recall; with this cold comfort indeed, that theſe worthy men have left their principles to thoſe among us, who are inclined to profit by them. From theſe principles, compared with their practice, we cannot but judge they were under ſome ſmall conſtraint, touching the ſubject now in hand. And if it ſhould be found, upon a fair examination, that, for the ſake of preſerving the appearance of conſiſtency, they have ſet their apologies for ſubſcribing in a light which has thrown back the real truth into ſhade and obſcurity; it is but juſtice to bring it once more forward to public view; if haply a circumſtance in our diſcipline, which has more or leſs turned to our reproach with Diſſenters of all denominations, may at length be either quite diſcarded, or put into a condition fit to be owned by every honeſt man and ſincere Proteſtant among us.

The controverſy with Dr. *Waterland*, concerning what he thought fit to call *Arian* ſubſcription, took its riſe, it ſeems, from ſome paſſages in Dr. *Clarke's* Introduction to his *Scripture-doctrine of the* Trinity, wherein that learned and excellent perſon (conſcious that the contents of his book would hardly be thought to agree with the eſtabliſhed forms of the church) thought proper to apprize his readers, that the church of *England* did not mean more by ſubſcription, nor require more of ſubſcribers, than that they ſhould conform their opinions to the true ſenſe of ſcripture; the

the inveſtigation of which ſenſe, he ſuppoſes, was by the church left to the ſubſcriber himſelf; otherwiſe, that the church muſt be inconſiſtent with her own plain and repeated declarations.

With Dr. *Clarke* therefore we ſhall begin, the rather as Dr. *Clarke's* reaſonings upon this ſubject have prevailed with ſome to comply with the church's ſubſcription, who are now ready to own that they think thoſe reaſonings inſufficient for their juſtification.

The Doctor's ſtate of the caſe then is briefly this: "At the Reformation, religion began to "recover in a great meaſure, out of the great "Apoſtacy: when the doctrine of Chriſt and his "Apoſtles was again *declared* to be the only rule "of truth, in which were contained all things "neceſſary to faith and manners. And *had that* "*declaration conſtantly been adhered to*, and human "authority in matters of faith been diſclaimed in "DEEDS, as well as in WORDS, there had been "poſſibly no more ſchiſms in the church of God, "nor diviſions of any conſiderable moment a-"mong Proteſtants. — But, though contentions "and uncharitableneſs have prevailed in practice, "yet (thanks be to God) the root of unity hath "continued amongſt us; and the ſcripture hath "univerſally been *declared* to be the only rule of "truth, a ſufficient guide both in faith and prac-"tice; and thoſe who differ in opinion, have "done ſo only becauſe each party has thought "their own opinion founded in ſcripture; and

"men

"men are required to receive things becauſe, "and only becauſe, they are found (and conſe- "quently *in no other ſenſe* than [that] wherein "they are found) in the holy ſcriptures. Where- "fore, in any queſtion of controverſy concerning "a matter of *faith*, Proteſtants are obliged (for "the deciding of it) to have recourſe to no other "authority whatſoever, but that of ſcripture on- "ly [*B*]."

This is ſpecious: And the time was, as I ſaid, when, by this deduction of particulars, the Doctor ſeemed to me to be fairly entitled to his conſequence, which is, that a man may honeſtly ſubſcribe the thirty-nine Articles of the church of *England*, accommodated to the ſenſe of ſcripture, as he himſelf underſtands it. And certainly words and oaths cannot diſclaim human authority in matters of faith, with more vehemence and preciſion, whether on the part of the church, or ſome of her moſt eminent doctors, than is done in the citations that follow this repreſentation.

But, upon having recourſe to theſe paſſages upon a *ſecond* occaſion, a ſudden queſtion forced itſelf upon me, and would take no denial; *viz.* How ſtand the DEEDS in the church of *England*? *Theſe* WORDS indeed are plain; but is there nothing in the *acts* and *deeds* of this church, which implies that *theſe* are *but* words? And are there

[*B*] Introduct. to Script. Doct. of the *Trinity*, Ed. 2. p. viii, ix, x.

no

no other words, which directly unſay what is ſaid in theſe? Why yes. It will be found upon examination, that the DEEDS of the church of *England* are very plain and ſtrong on the ſide of human authority, diſclaiming in their turn theſe verbal declarations of the Proteſtant religion, by many formal acts and ordinances, and contravening them in ſome inſtances, where there ſeems to be ſome outward reſpect paid to them.

Men, it is true, are required to receive things for no other *given* cauſe, and upon no other *declared* authority, than becauſe they are found in ſcripture, and in no other ſenſe but that in which they are *ſaid* to be *ſo* found. But, *in fact*, we are allowed to receive theſe things in no other ſenſe, than that in which the church *declares ſhe* hath found them herſelf; which is ſometimes a ſenſe, that the perſon obliged to *receive* it is not able to find, let him ſearch for it with ever ſo much capacity and diligence. So that though Proteſtants are obliged by their *original* principles to adhere to no other authority whatever than that of the ſcripture; yet, by coming under *poſterior* engagements and ſtipulations with the church of *England* by law eſtabliſhed, and particularly by acknowledging that this church *hath authority in controverſies of faith*, they are obliged to take her interpretations of ſcripture, not only in preference to, but in excluſion of *their own*.

Dr. *Waterland* indeed ſays, "that no man is "required by the church to ſubſcribe [that is, to

" receive things] againſt his conſcience, or in a " ſenſe which he thinks not agreeable to ſcri- " pture [C]."

That is to ſay, if a man cannot bring himſelf to ſubſcribe in the church's ſenſe, as thinking *that* ſenſe not agreeable to ſcripture, he may let ſubſcribing alone, without any cenſure or puniſhment.

But Dr. *Waterland* knew very well, and ſo did Dr. *Clarke* too, that ſuch a one refuſing to ſubſcribe, or to receive things in the church's ſenſe, would be underſtood, in that inſtance, to decline any engagements with the church, and, in ſo doing, to forfeit all the advantages that would have accrued from his compliance; which may happen to be his whole livelihood.

Dr. *Waterland* could not mean, that the church cenſures no man for ſubſcribing in a ſenſe which he thinks agreeable to ſcripture, but contrary to the church's ſenſe. For he himſelf hath ſhewn the contrary, eſpecially where ſuch ſubſcriber avows his own ſenſe. And, with reſpect to other caſes, the Doctor obſerves very pertinently, that " The connivance and toleration of ſuperiors at " offences does not take away the guilt of ſuch " offences [D]." The preſcribed form of ſubſcription plainly ſuppoſes the man who ſets his name to it, to ſubſcribe in the church's ſenſe.

[C] Caſe, p. 16.
[D] Caſe, p. 44.

And

And what occaſion or what room have ſuperiors either to exerciſe or declare any cenſures, when the ſubſcriber ſigns his name quietly and peaceably to the preſcribed form, without ſaying a ſyllable againſt it?

Dr. *Clarke* ſays, "If tradition, cuſtom, careleſſneſs, or miſtake, have put a ſenſe upon human forms, diſagreeable to ſcripture, a man is indiſpenſably bound not to underſtand or receive them in that ſenſe [*E*]."

That is, indiſpenſably bound *in conſcience*. True. But if that *miſtaken* ſenſe is not barely put there by a private and miſtaken man, but bound upon, and incorporated with the human form, by public authority, this *not underſtanding it*, or *not receiving it*, will juſt amount to *not ſubſcribing it*.

"The church," ſaith the Doctor, "hath no legiſlative authority [*F*]." We agree to this likewiſe. Biſhop *Hoadley*, and before him St. *Paul*, have proved it beyond the poſſibility of an anſwer. But, in this caſe of ſubſcription, the queſtion is not what power the church *hath of right*, but what power ſhe *exerciſes*. It is very poſſible for a man to wave or to give up his rights, whether civil or religious, to an *uſurped* authority.

"Every man," ſaith Dr. *Clarke*, "that for the ſake of peace and order [*let me add*, or for a

[*E*] Introduct. p. xxiii.

[*F*] *Apud* Caſe of Arian Subſcription, p. 21.

" maintenance] aſſents to, or makes uſe of hu-
" man forms, is *obliged* to reconcile and under-
" ſtand them in ſuch a ſenſe only as appears to
" him to be conſiſtent with the doctrine of ſcri-
" pture; otherwiſe he parts with his Chriſtianity,
" for the ſake of a civil and political religion" [G].

The Doctor means, *obliged in conſcience*, and *as a Proteſtant*. But, ſuppoſe he cannot reconcile and underſtand theſe human forms *in ſuch ſenſe only*, or even *at all*, (which is not an impoſſible caſe); what is he obliged to then? — May not ſuch a man, as the caſe is here put, *be obliged* ſo to underſtand, reconcile, and aſſent to Pope *Pius's* creed, or a chapter in the *Koran*, upon the ſame conſiderations?

But the true caſe is really this: Proteſtant churches ought not to employ human powers to eſtabliſh religion upon civil and political principles, nor ought conſcientious Chriſtians to receive their religion ſo eſtabliſhed. But, if Proteſtant churches, ſo called, *have done this*, and approved by *deeds* what they have diſclaimed in *words*, they have left the *conſiſtent* Chriſtian no option, but either to comply with thoſe churches upon *civil* and *political* principles, or to decline all *doctrinal* connexion with them.

To what Dr. *Clarke* ſays (*Introduct.* p. xvii.) concerning the *declarations* of the church in the

[G] Caſe of Ar. Subſcription, p. 23.

ſixth,

ſixth, twentieth, and twenty-firſt Articles, as giving countenance to his ſcheme of ſubſcription; Dr. *Waterland* anſwers, "That theſe declarations "amount to no more, than that nothing is to be "received, but what is agreeable to ſcripture. "And for this very reaſon the church requires "ſubſcription in *her own ſenſe*, becauſe ſhe judges "*no other* ſenſe to be agreeable to ſcripture [*H*]."

This is indeed giving the church but a very indifferent character, repreſenting her as *inſinuating one* thing, and *meaning another*. But, if it is a true character, who can help it? The church, perhaps, might ſuppoſe, that the ſcripture could never be more accurately interpreted, than ſhe had interpreted it in her Articles. Be that how it would, her own interpretation of it in theſe Articles, is the only one ſhe admits of, excluſive of all other ſenſes. And therefore Dr. *Waterland* is fairly entitled to his concluſion, "If any judge "that the church's own ſenſe is not agreeable "to ſcripture, let them not ſubſcribe."

"When in the public forms," ſays Dr. *Clarke*, "there be (as there generally are) expreſſions which, *at firſt ſight*, look different ways, it can-"not be but men muſt be allowed to interpret "what is obſcure, by that which ſeems to them "more plain and ſcriptural [*I*]."

[*H*] Caſe of *Arian* Subſcription, p. 25.
[*I*] Ibid. p. 26.

Another advocate on the ſame ſide expreſſeth this matter thus: "Unleſs this liberty be allowed" (*i. e.* the liberty of ſubſcribing the Articles in *any* ſenſe the words will bear, and in which they may be reconciled to *(the ſubſcribers own ſenſe of)* ſcripture, and to the other authorized forms of the church) "no body can ſubſcribe the Arti-"cles, Creeds, and Liturgy of the church of "*England* at all; there are ſeveral things in theſe "forms, which, if taken in the moſt obvious ſenſe, "contradict one another [*K*]."

No matter for that, if you ſubſcribe them they muſt be *ſo* taken. For who can give you the liberty you deſire? Not the Biſhops, nor even the Legiſlature without a new law; and then ſurely no private man has the power to *take* this liberty of himſelf. "No man, ſays *Philelcutherus*, "without this liberty can ſubſcribe our public "forms." Without what liberty? Why the liberty of *reconciling contradictions*. Did *Philelcutherus* conſider to what this liberty may amount? What is there that, *with this liberty*, a man cannot ſubſcribe? Might not the moſt crude ſyſtem of Paganiſm be made good Chriſtian divinity, by putting a *leſs obvious* ſenſe upon it?

Let us ſee how Dr. *Waterland* provides againſt this inconvenience. "Sometimes, ſays he, (in "our public forms) the *Father* is ſtiled *only God*; oftener *all three*. Sometimes *two* of the perſons are introduced, in *a ſubordination of order* to the

[*K*] Eſſay on impoſing, &c. by *Philelcutherus Cantabrigienſis*, p. 43.

"*firſt*. At other times, their perfect equality of "nature" (which, by the way, excludes all ſorts and degrees of ſubordination, for *ſubordination of order*, is nonſenſe) "is as fully and clearly pro-"feſſed [*L*]."

Theſe, I ſuppoſe, are the *contradictions* and *obſcurities*, or ſome of them, objected by Dr. *Clarke*, and *Phileleutherus*. But Dr. *Waterland* will have it, that all here is eaſy and conſiſtent; "be-"cauſe what goes before or after them, and other "paſſages in our public forms, REQUIRE that "they ſhould be *conſiſtent*." In conſequence of which, Dr. *Waterland* is for putting *a leſs obvious ſenſe* upon thoſe paſſages which ſeem, *at firſt ſight*, to contravene a *perfect equality* in the Godhead.

Would this ridiculous ſophiſtry of *Waterland's*, have gone down with Dr. *Clarke* and his party? By no means. And yet they proceed upon the ſame principle, when they would put *a leſs obvious ſenſe* upon the paſſages which affirm *a perfect equality*; namely, becauſe the plain ſcriptural doctrine of *a ſubordination of nature*, REQUIRES this *leſs obvious ſenſe* to be put upon thoſe paſſages, that all may be *clear* and *conſiſtent*.

But who ſees not that *all* theſe ſeveral ſenſes are eſtabliſhed in our public forms? Who ſees not that, in the eye of the law, and in the *intention* of the church, every ſubſcriber ſubſcribes to them *all*? And conſequently, that in ſubſcribing, Dr. *Waterland* was an *Arian*, and Dr. *Clarke* an

[*L*] *Waterland's* Caſe, &c. p. 30, 31.

Athanaſian as often as they *received* theſe inconſiſtent forms, reſpectively, by ſubſcribing them.

In one word, all Dr. *Clarke's* arguments that I have ſeen, tend only to prove, that in truth, and reaſon, and common juſtice, and common ſenſe, ſuch and ſuch things ought not to have been impoſed upon Chriſtians in proteſtant churches: which he and others have done with all poſſible preciſion and perſpicuity. But not one of them hath been able to ſhew, that ſuch things *are not* impoſed. Dr. *Clarke*, indeed, has as good as confeſſed the fact, in the long paſſage I have cited from his *Introduction*. And hath more than ſuppoſed it, in the ſuggeſtions at the end of his book, concerning the expediency of a *Review* of our eccleſiaſtical forms. For if all theſe liberties in *aſſenting* to and *ſubſcribing* theſe forms are given, and may be *honeſtly* and *conſcientiouſly* taken, the occaſion for a *Review*, or, in other words, for altering theſe forms, cannot be ſo very preſſing as he would repreſent it.

The next advocate for this liberty and latitude in our ſubſcriptions, is the acute writer of, *The Caſe of ſubſcription*, &c. in anſwer to Dr. *Waterland's* Caſe of *Arian* ſubſcription [*M*]. But as this Gentleman argues chiefly from Dr. *Waterland's* conceſſions, and from *that* in particular which imports that *ſome* of the Articles are left indeterminate, there is not much in his pamphlet which has not already fallen under our notice.

[*M*] Commonly ſuppoſed to be Dr. *Sykes*.

Some

ſome things, however, deſerve our farther conſideration.

The firſt remarkable occurrence in this performance, is the great ſtreſs that is laid upon King *Charles* I's Declaration, which gave the latitudinarian ſubſcribers the firſt hint of *general*, *literal*, and *grammatical* ſenſes. It has been proved before, that this reſcript is of no manner of validity. But ſuppoſe it, for the preſent, to have the validity of a royal Declaration? What would be its operation? Juſt the ſame with that of King *James* IId's *Declaration for liberty of Conſcience*: which went upon the pretence, that there was a power in the Crown to diſpenſe with the Statute-Law of the land. The xxxix Articles in *Charles* I's time had as ſtrong a ſtatute on their ſide, as any of thoſe which excluded Papiſts from offices of truſt or power in the reign of *James* II. The title of theſe Articles was recognized in the Act of the 13th of *Elizabeth*. And that title ſet forth, that they were agreed upon *for the preventing diverſities of opinions*, and conſequently, for the preventing of all *general*, *literal*, or *grammatical* ſenſes, which *admitted* diverſities of opinions. King *Charles's* Declaration then, which is underſtood to have introduced *theſe* ſenſes, and thereby to have allowed of *diverſities of opinions*, was juſt as *ſubverſive* of the *eccleſiaſtical*, as King *James's* was of the *civil* conſtitution. I have indeed ſaid elſewhere, that I do not underſtand the Declaration before the Articles in this light. I offer this therefore

therefore only as an argument *ad hominem*, which might have put this ingenious perſon to ſome trouble to vindicate his revolution-principles, of which he was known to be a ſtrenuous and ſucceſsful aſſertor.

What he ſays from *Fuller's* Church-Hiſtory of *Britain*, is ſomething (and but very little) more conſiderable. It concerns *Rogers's* Expoſition of the xxxix Articles. "Some Proteſtants, accor-"ding to *Fuller*, conceived it preſumption for "any private miniſter, to make himſelf the mouth "of the church, to render her ſenſe in matters "of ſo high concernment. Others were offend-"ed, that he [*Rogers*] confined the charitable "latitude, formerly allowed in theſe Articles; "the compoſers whereof, providently foreſeeing "differences of opinions, purpoſely couched the "Articles in general terms, &c. [*N*]."

Now, I would deſire to know what there is in this cenſure extraordinary? or what there is in it that affects *Rogers's* Expoſition, more than the ſentiments of particular readers affect any other new book that is publiſhed? and particularly, any expoſition of theſe Articles?

Biſhop *Burnet*, in the Hiſtory of his own times, gives us an account, of the ill reception *his* Expoſition met with among ſome church-of-*England*

[*N*] *Caſe of ſubſcr. occaſioned*, &c. p. 14. See this fancy of Dr. *Fuller's* effectually overthrown in a pamphlet intituled, *Remarks on the rev. Dr.* Powell's *ſermon in defence of ſubſcriptions*, p. 46. e. q. s. printed for *Millar* 1758.

men,

men, and records an attempt to cenſure it even in the Convocation, particularly becauſe of his aſſerting, that men might ſubſcribe the Articles in any *literal* or *grammatical* ſenſe the words would bear.

Would the author of *the Caſe* allow theſe cenſures to be a good argument, that the compoſers of the Articles intended *no* latitude? Or would he allow them, without ſome farther circumſtance of proof, to invalidate *His Majeſty's Declaration*, under the wing of which the Biſhop aſſerts this latitude?

If not, what proof can he draw from *Fuller's* hiſtorical account of a matter of fact, that *Rogers* was in the wrong, and that the compoſers of the Articles *did* really intend a latitude?

Probably it will be ſaid, that the cenſurers of *Rogers's* book, living nearer the times of the compoſers than Biſhop *Burnet's* opponents, had a better opportunity to know whether they intended a latitude or not. But to this it would be ſufficient to anſwer, that *Rogers* himſelf, living nearer thoſe times, than either Biſhop *Burnet*, or even *Fuller* himſelf, muſt be better acquainted with the minds of the compoſers, than either of theſe hiſtorians; and full as well as any of his cenſurers. So that from this kind of preſumptive reaſoning no truth ariſes, either on the one ſide or the other.

If we go farther into particulars, *Rogers* has greatly the advantage of all that come after him, in point of authority. His book was dedicated to Archbiſhop *Bancroft*, whoſe chaplain he

he was; and bears in the front of it, a teſtimony, that it was *peruſed, and, by the lawful authority of the church of* England, *allowed to be public* [O].

[O] Both they who ſaid in *Fuller's* days, that *Rogers* made himſelf the mouth of the Church as a *private miniſter*, and they who, in theſe later times, have denied that the ſaid *Rogers* had the authority he pretends to in his title-page, were miſtaken. The appointed licenſers of books, at that time, were the chaplains of the Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, and the Biſhop of *London*, and ſometimes of other Biſhops. *Rogers* was chaplain to Archbiſhop *Bancroft*, and as ſuch had (what was then eſteemed a *lawful*) authority to give books their paſſport to the preſs. But to have given a formal *imprimatur* in his own name, to his own book, would have had an odd appearance. He therefore choſe to ſignify the approbation of his book in the manner he has done. And as there can be no doubt but he took *Bancroft's* ſenſe of the matter for his rule, he certainly had the authority of the church of *England* for publiſhing his book; and became the mouth of the church, upon the ſtrength of that authority; and did not *make himſelf* the mouth of the church, as a *private miniſter*. On the other hand, Biſhop *Burnet*, who had the private concurrence and encouragement of Archbiſhop *Tenniſon* and ſeveral others of the bench, declares that his expoſition was *not a work of authority*; nor do any of the reſt who have written upon the ſubject pretend to it, except *Welchman*, and he indeed brings an *Imprimatur* from a Deputy Vicechancellor of *Oxford*, who certainly was not *the mouth of the church*. This book of *Rogers's* then is the only *authoritative* expoſition we have of the articles; though *Welchman's* is the book in vogue for the examination of candidates, and hath paſſed through no leſs than *ten* editions, *ſix* Latin, and *four* Engliſh, and all with conſiderable variations from *Rogers*, particularly in the article of *ſcripture proofs*, ſome of which in *Welchman*, are ſomething worſe than nothing to the purpoſe. And as to the other explanations and authorities that *Welchman* brings, it is remarkable that he is ten times more *reſtrictive*, with reſpect to a particular determinate ſenſe,

" That

"That in our Articles, ſays this writer, a la-
"titude was deſigned to be given to, and there-
"fore may be taken by the ſubſcriber, is no new
"opinion, or of nine or ten years ſtanding only,
"is evident [O]."

That the opinion is not new, is indeed evident from *Fuller*. But *opinion* is one thing, and *fact* is another. That ſuch latitude was really deſigned, never has been, nor ever can be proved. It was Dr. *Waterland's opinion*, with reſpect to the calviniſtical Articles. But this very Author of the *Caſe*, hath, in anſwer to *Waterland's* Supplement, made it ſufficiently evident, that the Doctor's opinion was groundleſs. And if ſo, the Doctor might effectually have turned the tables upon him, with reſpect to the Articles concerning the Trinity, in ſome of which the compilers of 1562, have taken away the little appearance of latitude there was in the Articles of K. Edward [Q].

This opinion of a latitude intended to be given to ſubſcribers of the Articles is indeed only matter of oral tradition, bred out of the diſtreſs of ſome particular perſons, who deſired to keep a good conſcience, and not to part with a good benefice. One would think, by *Fuller's* manner of repreſenting the cenſures upon *Rogers*, that there

than *Rogers* himſelf. And therefore though the fathers of our church do not chuſe to own *Welchman*, otherwiſe than by their *practice*; the very uſe they make of him ſhews, that they are by no means in love with a *laxity* of interpretation.

[P] *Caſe* occaſioned, &c. p. 14.

[Q] See Remarks on *Powell's* ſermon, p. 51.

had

had been a cloud of witneſſes for this *intended* latitude. But when he had occaſion to defend his poſition, he could name only King *James*, who had no better proof of it than another man; *viz.* the occaſion he had for this hypotheſis when he was veering about to the *Arminians*.

Nothing is more evident, in the eccleſiaſtical hiſtories of thoſe times, than that Queen *Elizabeth's* Biſhops, either had no notion that *latitude* and *toleration* were Goſpel-privileges, or an utter averſion to ſuch notion, as ſchiſmatical and puritanical. Their own hardſhips under Queen *Mary* had taught them very little compaſſion for diſſenters, when the rod of correction came into their own hands, though honeſt *Fuller* would have had it believed, that it was a conſideration of this ſort, that brought forth this *diſcrete laxity* in wording the Articles; in which there is juſt as much truth, as there is common ſenſe in his ſuppoſing them to have *prediſcovered* the diſſenſions, that would happen in the church an hundred years after they were dead.

But the ingenious author of the *Caſe*, beſides bringing theſe authorities, bethinks himſelf of pleading for this latitude from the reaſon of the thing.

"He that compoſes a form of words, ſays he, "either ſo *inaccurately*, or ſo *deſignedly*, as that the "propoſitions contained in them, in the uſual "literal conſtruction, may or do ſignify differ-"ent things, has no reaſon to complain of pre-

"varication,

"varication, if men of very different notions u-
"nite in ſubſcribing ſuch form."

But the church denies that this is her caſe. She declares her articles were not *ſo* compoſed, either *inaccurately* or *deſignedly*. The fallacy of this reaſoning conſiſts in the *Caſuiſt's* ſuppoſing, that the uſual literal conſtruction of words is *not always the ſame*. When the church ſet forth theſe forms of words, the uſual, literal conſtruction of them was but *one*. If time, and the mutability of language, have given room for *another* uſual, literal conſtruction of theſe words, or forms, the church cannot help that, becauſe ſhe could not foreſee it. They who underſtand *both* conſtructions (as all ſcholars do) know very well, that the *old* one is the church's conſtruction; and therefore, they who put the *new* conſtruction upon the church's *old* words, or forms,—*they*, I ſay, and not the compilers of the Articles, are the *inaccurate* perſons, and, as ſuch, are juſtly complained of for *prevaricating*. And indeed all the ſubſequent ſophiſtry of this writer turns upon what he calls, the *natural* and *proper* ſignification of words. *Natural* and *proper*, with reſpect to the ſignification of ſuch words *in modern uſage*, were, he well knows, though he chuſes to diſſemble it, *unnatural* and *improper*, in the year 1562.

Let us now take a view of another ſincere friend to religious liberty, who wrote a pamphlet, much eſteemed, in the year 1719, under the name of *Phileleutherus Cantabrigienſis*, intituled

An

An eſſay on impoſing and ſubſcribing Articles of Religion.

This very ſenſible writer begins with making allowances for an (humanly) eſtabliſhed authority in matters eccleſiaſtical. (And by the way, makes a great many more *allowances* than he ought to have made [*R*].) After which he inſiſts, that, "no Articles, as a Rule and Standard of "doctrinal preaching, ought to be impoſed, be-"cauſe of the great danger that the right of "Chriſtians to *private judgment* incurrs by ſuch "impoſition;" notwithſtanding which, he is of opinion, that, "*for the ſake of peace*, a man may "ſubmit to an uſurpation upon this right, pro-"vided he *believes* what is contained in the Ar-"ticles."

When he comes to explain what he means by *believing* what is contained in the Articles, it appears to be, "*believing* them in *any* ſenſe the "words will admit of." In conſequence of which, he takes ſome pains to ſhew, that "theſe "Articles may be ſubſcribed (and conſequently "believed) by a *Sabellian*, an orthodox *Trinita-"rian* (whoſe opinion he calls nonſenſe), a *Tri-"theiſt*, and an *Arian* ſo called."

One would wonder what idea this writer had of *peace*, when he ſuppoſed it might be kept by the act of ſubſcription, among men of theſe different judgments. Why might not the ſame

[*R*] See *An Apology for a Proteſtant Diſſent*, printed for *Burne* 1755, p. 28, 29.

men,

men, with equal ſafety to the peace of the church, ſubſcribe *four* ſeveral forms of words, each expreſſing his own ſyſtem clearly and explicitly, as ſubſcribe *the ſame* form of words, in *four* different ſenſes?

But did this Gentleman, in good earneſt, believe, that the compilers of the Articles *intended* to make room for theſe *four* ſeveral ſenſes? I will anſwer for him —He did not believe it. We all know, by the title of the Articles, and he knew it as well as any of us, that the ſenſe of the compilers was but *one* ſenſe; and that ſenſe being bound upon the ſubſcriber by law, it is plain that three of the ſenſes abovementioned are excluded, both in the intention of the compilers, and by the tenor of the law which eſtabliſhes the Articles, and injoins ſubſcription to them.

Let us now look back to his principles. Why ought not ſuch Articles to be impoſed upon Chriſtian Preachers, as a teſt? He does not, indeed, anſwer this queſtion in plain terms; but his principles lead us to a very juſt and proper anſwer to it; namely, becauſe the ſubject of preaching in a Chriſtian Church, is the Goſpel of Chriſt, over which no human power can have any controul, or exerciſe any, without incurring the guilt of ſetting up another Goſpel, under another authority, diſtinct from his, who hath declared himſelf to be the ONE Maſter to whom all Chriſtians ought to ſubmit. Would this Gentleman have aſſerted *totidem verbis*, that we may give

up our Chriſtian liberty to thoſe who *uſurp* the province of Chriſt? He makes uſe, indeed, of the word *uſurpation*, but he refers it only to *the right of private judgment*, and of this *right* or *liberty*, he makes little doubt, but a man may *abridge himſelf*, p. 33.

But upon what is this *right* founded? Is it not ſolely upon thoſe principles of the Goſpel, that Chriſt is King in his own Kingdom? That he is the only Lord and Maſter in matters pertaining to conſcience? And can any man give way to an uſurpation of that authority, which Chriſt claims ſolely to himſelf, without revolting from his allegiance, and ſubmitting to an uſurper of his Kingdom?

Here let us ſtop. There is no occaſion to proceed a ſtep further, or to enquire upon what notions of latitude in the Articles the *Eſſayer* could reconcile his ſubſcription to them with his obligations to *ſtand faſt in the liberty wherewith* Chriſt *hath made him free*. Upon which ſubject he hath indeed brought no more than hath been anſwered already.

There is yet another writer upon this ſubject, of the ſame complexion, who muſt not be wholly paſſed by, as he hath been at the pains to ſum up the whole merits of this caſe in a few words [*S*].

[*S*] In a pamphlet intituled, *The external Peace of the Church only attainable by a Zeal for Scripture in its juſt Latitude*, 1716, printed for *Baker*.

"If,"

"If," says he, "we consider ourselves as "members of the church of *England*, we are not "obliged to an uniformity of opinion."

In other words, the church of *England*, as such, hath *no uniform doctrine*; which, whatever the matter of fact may be, the church, I apprehend, will not take for a compliment. But this idle notion being built entirely on *His Majesty's Declaration*, falls to the ground along with that. He goes on:

"If the Legislature do not think fit to determine in what particular sense the subscriber "shall give his assent, it is very possible and well "known, that persons of quite opposite opinions "may and do subscribe."

Hath the legislature then determined, that men may subscribe the Articles in opposite senses? No. If not, then hath the legislature determined any thing about articles and subscriptions? Yes, it hath determined that the XXXIX Articles shall be subscribed, for the purpose of avoiding diversities of opinions. The legislature then hath determined that the Articles shall be subscribed only in *one* sense respectively; and that is, in the most obvious sense of each Article.

"The sense," saith this author, "which such "as require subscriptions *accept* and *tolerate*, is "to be the rule of subscription."

This matter is put in a wrong light. It is the Law, and the Law only, which *requireth* sub-

ſcription; and "*requireth* that it ſhould be made "before the Ordinary, that is, in the preſence "of the perſon who inſtitutes. The Ordinary "is not bound to offer the Articles to be ſub-"ſcribed; but the Clerk himſelf is bound to "offer to ſubſcribe them; and he muſt ſubſcribe "without any reſerve, exception, or qualifica-"tion [*T*]."

The *canonical* ſubſcription is indeed another affair, of which there is no preſent occaſion to ſay any thing, as the queſtion *here* is only concerning ſubſcription, as enjoined by the legiſlature. And enough has been ſaid of this to refute our author's fancy about *accepting* and *tolerating* ſenſes.

The author concludes thus: "Since the church "therefore *accepts* and *tolerates* contrary opinions, "'tis plain the church does not conceive identity "of opinion neceſſary to her tranquillity."

The church, as we have ſeen, *accepts* or *tolerates* nothing, but what the Law allows her to *accept* and *tolerate*: which is juſt the reverſe of *contrary opinions*. The notion indeed is abſurd, even ſo far as there is any colour to apply it to the church. If the church *accepts* and *tolerates*, ſhe likewiſe *eſpouſes* and *maintains* contrary opinions. For the perſons, whoſe contrary opinions ſhe *accepts* and *tolerates*, do, by this very act of ſubſcription, become part of the body of the church herſelf, and moſt commonly are the very

[*T*] *Vade Mecum*, p. 79. under *Inſtitution*.

mouth

mouth of the church; and retail their *contrary opinions* to the public, by the very authority which the church gives them. Is not this to lift the church off her ancient foundations? Or rather is it not to own the juſtice of that reproach, "That "the church of *England*, properly ſo called, is "not now exiſting [*U*]?"

There were ſeveral others of this way of thinking, who bore a part in this controverſy, but, as they all went into the church at the ſame door which Dr. *Clarke* had opened for them, and believed, or pretended to believe, the proteſtations of the church, againſt the matter of fact, we meet with nothing in their reſpective ſyſtems of latitude, which hath not already been obviated. And, the matter of fact being ſo plain and in-

[*U*] See a pamphlet intituled, *Obſervations upon the Conduct of the Clergy in relation to the thirty-nine Articles.* "Theſe "ſtrictures of Religion," ſays this excellent writer, (meaning the thirty-nine Articles) "are either a rule of teaching in "this church, or they are not a rule. If they are not a rule, "what conſtitutes the church of *England?* If they be a rule "and a ſtandard, where muſt be grounded the authority of "modern teaching, which is not only not agreeable to theſe "Articles, but abſolutely a contrary ſyſtem? In caſe, by any "after-lights, a clergyman finds cauſe to change his ſubſcribing "opinion (a right I ſhall not diſpute), and goes into different "ſchemes, why is not ſuch diſagreement with his rule publicly "acknowledged, and the people advertiſed of the difference? "This myſtery of the pulpit appears to me unfair with reſpect "to the people. They have no fixed ſight of their miniſter's "ſcheme. They can have no *ſecurity*, no *dependance* upon "him, in *any* doctrinal point whatſoever." Pag. 2, 3.

diſputable, it is to little purpoſe to argue the matter of *right*, upon the original Proteſtant principle; as if that principle was ſtill allowed to have its uncontrouled operation in the matter of ſubſcription to the Articles. We frankly allow that every Proteſtant, as ſuch, has a right to deny his aſſent to, or approbation of, any doctrine, which he himſelf conceives to be contrary to the ſcriptures. But the moment he ſits down to ſubſcribe the xxxix Articles, circumſtanced and conditioned as that ſubſcription now is, he ſits down to ſign away this right (as much as in him lies), and to transfer it to the church. The church, indeed, does not in ſo many words require him to ſubſcribe to any thing which is *contrary* or even *diſagreeable* to the ſcripture. But the church, by obtaining that ſubſcription from him, takes the interpretation of ſcripture out of his hands. It is the church, and the church only, that *finds therein*, and *proves thereby*, the propoſitions to be ſubſcribed. And if a man ſhould after that pretend to interpoſe his own judgment in contradiction to the church's *findings* and *provings*, the church, with the help of the ſtate, would ſoon ſhew him his miſtake; by virtue of that *Alliance*, the original inſtrument of which hath been ſo happily diſcovered and commented upon by a great Genius of our own times. The church of *England* "tells mankind indeed, they ſhall "judge for themſelves. But if they who take

"her

" her word, do not think and judge as ſhe does, " they ſhall ſuffer for it, and be turned out of the " houſe." To prove the EQUITY of which proceeding (EQUITY and UTILITY, in this author's idea, being the ſame thing) is the laudable purpoſe of this famous new-found ALLIANCE.

There is yet one writer behind, who hath offered a plea for liberty and latitude in ſubſcribing the Articles, of a different complexion from the reſt. The writer I mean is Dr. *Clayton*, the late worthy Biſhop of *Clogher* in *Ireland*, and author of the *Eſſay on Spirit*, who, in his Dedication of that learned work, hath taken this matter of *ſubſcription* into particular conſideration.

Biſhop *Conybeare* had obſerved, in his ſermon on the *Caſe of Subſcription*, that the xxxix Articles are not to be conſidered as Articles of Peace, but of Doctrine, as the very title denotes, which is, *for avoiding diverſities of opinions, and for eſtabliſhing conſent touching true religion.* And from this circumſtance his Lordſhip inferred, and very juſtly, " that every man's ſubſcription amounts to an " approbation of, and an aſſent to, the truth of " the doctrine therein contained, in the very " ſenſe in which the compilers thereof are ſup- " poſed to have underſtood them."

Now, the right reverend Eſſayiſt tells us his caſe was this: " Being a clergyman, he had ſub- " ſcribed the Articles pretty early in life, and " probably in the ſenſe in which the compilers " underſtood them. But finding reaſons after-

"wards to diſagree with his former opinions, he "laboured under ſome difficulties how to direct "himſelf in theſe circumſtances."

Had Biſhop *Conybeare* been conſulted upon theſe difficulties, there is little doubt but he would have anſwered, that this change of opinions in the Eſſayiſt was virtually diſclaiming his ſubſcription, which let him into his function; and, as he now no longer complied with the conditions required by the church of all her miniſters, an obligation ſeemed to lay upon him to reſign his preferments in the church.

To avoid this conſequence, Biſhop *Clayton* was inclined to conſider theſe Articles not as Articles of doctrine, but as Articles of peace. "As I ap-"prehend," ſays he, "that the church of *Ireland* "does not ſet up for infallibility, I do not think "ſhe requireth any other kind of ſubſcription "than ſuch as is neceſſary for peace-ſake."

What the laws of ſubſcription are in *Ireland*, I know not; but if his Lordſhip formed his judgment only on the circumſtance of the church of *Ireland's* diſclaiming infallibility, I fancy the caſe may be much the ſame there, as in our own country; where, though we are not *infallible*, we are *always in the right*. His *apprehenſions*, therefore, of eccleſiaſtical moderation, in the one country or the other, will go but a little way towards ſettling the debatable point between the Eſſayiſt and Biſhop *Conybeare*, which, reſting upon a matter

ter of fact, muſt be determined by ſuitable evidence.

"I apprehend," ſays Dr. *Clayton*, "any attempt towards avoiding diverſity of opinion, "not only to be an uſeleſs, but an impracticable "ſcheme." In which I entirely agree with him. But what then? It actually was the attempt of our firſt Reformers, and is ſtill the ſcheme of the churches of *England* and *Ireland*.

"I do not only doubt," continues he, "whether "the compilers of the Articles, but even whether any two *thinking men* ever agreed exactly "in their opinion, not only with regard to all the "Articles, but even with regard to any one of "them."

The preſumptive proof is very ſtrong, that *Cranmer* was the *ſole* compiler of K. *Edward's* Articles. The alterations and corrections of 1562, are well known to be in *Parker's* hand, who, though he might make a ſhew of conſulting his brethren, moſt probably gave them to underſtand at the ſame time, that the Articles were to paſs as they were then ſettled *. *Thinkers* in thoſe days, any more than in our own,

* The *Iriſh* Articles were different from thoſe of the church of *England*, till the year 1634, "when, by the *power* of the "Lord Deputy *Wentworth*, and the *dexterity* of Biſhop *Bramhal*, the Iriſh articles were repealed in a full convocation, "and thoſe of *England* authorized in the place thereof." *Heylin's* Hiſtory of the Preſbyterians, p. 395.

were

were not very common; and perhaps not half a dozen of those to whom they were communicated, or who subscribed them, considered how far they differed from each other, or suspected that they differed at all. They received them implicitly, as hundreds do to this hour: and consequently in the sense of the compiler or compilers. They transmitted them to posterity just as they received them; and just so were they bound upon posterity by law. The inutility, therefore, and the impracticability of an uniformity of opinion, where men are disposed to think for themselves, is indeed an unanswerable argument why such Articles *should never* be imposed, but will afford no proof that our xxxix Articles *are not* imposed with this particular view.

But though the right reverend Author of the *Essay* thinks thus of our Articles, and of the subscribers to them, he seems to think it expedient that there should be some such system of doctrines, not indeed as a test of *opinions*, but of *profession*. I say, he *seems* to think so. But let the reader judge from his own words.

"An uniformity of profession," says he, "may "indeed be both practicable and useful; and "seems, in some degree, to be necessary, not only "for the preservation of peace, but also for the "general good and welfare of society."

His Lordship must mean, an *uniformity* of profession with respect to those things, concerning which the belief or persuasion of the several *professors*

feſſors may be *different* and *multiform*. Otherwiſe the propoſition is not of ſufficient importance to require, or indeed to deſerve, a formal argument to ſupport it. For who ever doubted but that, in matters of religion, a man both uſefully may and reaſonably ought to profeſs what he believes?

By religion I mean the Chriſtian religion. But to believe one thing, and to profeſs another, the Chriſtian religion calls *hypocriſy*, and under that name ſeverely cenſures and condemns it. Hypocriſy, indeed, may ſerve the turn of a particular *claſs* of men in ſociety, who have views and intereſts diſtinct from the general good and welfare of the whole. But how this grand enemy to truth and virtue ſhould contribute either to the peace of, or be otherwiſe uſeful or wholeſome to, ſociety in general, is a myſtery that will require ſome elucidation.

"I do not conceive," ſays this ingenious Prelate, "how any ſociety or commonwealth can "ſubſiſt, unleſs ſome form of religion or other "be eſtabliſhed therein, as well with regard to "doctrine as diſcipline; which [points of doc-"trine] however ought to be as plain, few, and "fundamental as poſſible."

Forms of diſcipline are not, indeed, now at iſſue; but are however neceſſary to be taken into the account. And as St. *Paul* thought, that men might *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godlineſs and honeſty*, under proper ſubjection

to,

to, and coercion of the *civil* magiſtrate, I do not ſee that I ſhould be aſhamed to think ſo too. And this point being ſettled, how the ſubſiſtence of any ſociety or republic ſhould depend upon the eſtabliſhment of *doctrinal* forms of religion, is juſt as difficult for me to conceive, as it was to the learned Prelate to conceive the contrary [*W*].

That his Lordſhip meant ſome *human* form of religion, is evident from his adding, that *the points of doctrine in ſuch form, ſhould be as plain, few, and fundamental as poſſible.* But, for my part, I cannot ſee why eſtabliſhing the ſcriptures ſhould not anſwer all the ends of civil ſociety, *in this reſpect*, as well as any other forms. When you have made a proper proviſion for the *external* deportment of men, as ſubjects to the ſtate, by a wholeſome and righteous civil inſtitute, it remains only that their religious manners, ſentiments,

[*W*] "With regard to the ſafety of the government from "perſons diſapproving the communion of the church, that "point the Prince only has to do with, and the Legiſlature. "In caſe a teſt can be found, of a ſecular kind, adequate to "that purpoſe, as certainly there may, to draw religious con- "troverſies into the queſtion, is altogether foreign. This lat- "ter makes the *ſafety* propoſed by it (if I am not miſtaken) "not ſo properly the ſafety of the Prince or Monarchy [*one "may add likewiſe*, of the ſtate], as the *ſafety* of the Clergy and "Hierarchy, in their authority and acquiſitions. Otherwiſe "the oath of Supremacy and Allegiance would be ſufficient. "'Tis the only teſt the occaſion naturally calls for." SEA- GRAVE's *Obſervations on the Conduct of the Clergy in relation to the thirty-nine Articles*, p. 45, 46.

and

and diſpoſitions ſhould be formed by the rules, precepts, and doctrines of the word of God. But this being a matter rather of *perſonal* than of *public* concern, muſt be left to the men themſelves, if we would have the work done with its proper influence and effect. Whatever appearances of ſanctity, devotion, and Chriſtian virtue, external forms and ordinances may produce in public, it is but ſo much hypocriſy, if a real principle of religion is not in the hearts of the ſeveral individuals; and how this principle ſhould be planted in the heart, rather by *human* forms, than by the genuine ſcriptures, no mortal can tell. From what I have ſeen of human forms, I will venture to ſay, that points of Chriſtian doctrine *cannot* be made *plainer* in them, than they are already in the ſcriptures; and *fewer* or *leſs fundamental* they *ought not* to be made.

But, to come a little nearer the point in hand: The Biſhop doubts, as we have ſeen, "whether "any two thinking men ever agreed exactly in "opinion with regard to any *one* of our xxxix "Articles." And he who doubts this can hardly ſuppoſe that any form of doctrine can be drawn up in human language, conſiſting of points ſo plain, few, and fundamental, as that all, or even a majority, of thoſe for whoſe uſe they are intended, ſhall perfectly agree in them. The Biſhop will ſay, there is no occaſion they ſhould, becauſe *uniformity of profeſſion* is all that he wants to have eſtabliſhed. But, if ſo, why will not

our

our present Articles, why indeed will not the Articles of *Trent*, do as well as any other for the purpose? He that professes to believe points of doctrine which he does not believe, be they ever so *plain*, *few*, or *fundamental*, in the apprehension of the establishers, is just as much an hypocrite, as if such forms were stuffed with ever so many impertinences, or even falsities.

The use of religion to society, I apprehend to be, that men having in their hearts the fear of God and of his judgments, may be restrained from evil, and encouraged to be virtuous, in such instances as are beyond the reach of human laws. Points of doctrine therefore, established for the public good of society, must have this *use of religion* for their object. But if a man *disbelieves* in his *heart*, what he *professes* with his tongue or with his pen, religion, as such, has no hold of him in that instance, and society has no more benefit from his *profession*, than if such points of doctrine had not been established.

Again. To make uniformity of religious profession necessary, in *any* degree, for the subsistence of the commonweath, it must be necessary that the points to be professed, be established upon *exclusive* conditions. And this extending, in our author's plan, both to doctrine and discipline, will leave no room for dissenters in either. For every dissenter breaks in upon the scheme of uniformity, and consequently on the peace and welfare which this uniformity is intended to maintain.

tain. This, at once, demoliſhes all thoſe ſyſtems of Government which tolerate doctrines and diſciplines, contrary to the eſtabliſhed forms. Whereas, experience has taught us, that thoſe commonwealths have always been either the freeſt from religious feuds, or the leaſt incommoded by them, which have tolerated different ſects with the greateſt latitude, and appropriated the feweſt emoluments to *one*.

If the queſtion ſhould be aſked, why a commonwealth, or a ſtate, cannot ſubſiſt in peace and welfare without ſome eſtabliſhed form of religion? the anſwer to be expected from his Lordſhip would be, that except men were uniform in their profeſſion of religion, there could be nothing in a ſtate but diſcord and confuſion. And yet his Lordſhip ſays, "if men were not to ſpeak "their minds in ſpite of eſtabliſhments (that is "to ſay, *openly profeſs things contrary to eſtabliſh-* "*ments*), truth would ſoon be baniſhed from "the earth."

Does not this plainly imply, that eſtabliſhments baniſh truth from the earth, in the ſame proportion, as they anſwer the ends of peace and welfare to the civil community? Or, how could worſe evils reſult from mens ſpeaking their minds, when they were under no reſtraints from eſtabliſhments, than now, that they take that liberty *in ſpite* of them?

The Defender of the *eſſay on ſpirit*, is diſpleaſed with ſomebody for ſuggeſting that his client ought to have been againſt all religious eſtabliſh-

ments,

ments, which however is true enough, if theſe abovementioned are the effects of them. True Religion never can ſubſiſt, whatever may become of civil communities, upon the baſis of hypocriſy; or where men are *obliged* to *profeſs* one thing, and *allowed* to *believe* another. And if the rule of true religion be taken from the Chriſtian ſcriptures, the temporal peace and ſafety of any Chriſtian, in civil ſociety, is but a ſecondary conſideration, to the obligation he is under to hold faſt his integrity, in *truth* and *ſincerity*.

The reaſon given, why human eſtabliſhments with regard to religion are neceſſary, is, "that "the welfare and ſupport of ſociety is ſo founded "by the great *Author of Nature*, on the baſis of "religion, that it is impoſſible to ſeparate the "one from the other; and, of conſequence, the "eſtabliſhment of the one will neceſſarily re-"quire the eſtabliſhment of the other [*X*]."

The meaning of which, at the bottom, is only this, that human laws reach the exigencies of civil ſociety ſo imperfectly, that, unleſs the influence of religion is connected with them, the welfare and peace of civil ſociety cannot be ſupported. Which, I apprehend, no body will deny.

But then, as this plan of civil Government is delineated by the great *Author of Nature*, it will be neceſſary to take *his* directions in the execution of it; if any ſuch directions may be come at. And if no ſuch directions are to be found,

[*X*] Defence of the *Eſſay on ſpirit*, p. 2.

it

it is doubtful, whether the plan itſelf, authorized by the great *Author of Nature*, may be found.

The ſophiſm here turns upon the word *eſtabliſhment*. Religion may be ſaid to be *eſtabliſhed*, when it is received and profeſſed by individuals, upon the ſole authority of divine revelation. Civil ſociety can only be eſtabliſhed by human Laws and ordinances, at leaſt as this author conceives, and as, for the preſent, I am willing to grant. If then the eſtabliſhment of religion by *divine revelation*, is ſufficient to anſwer the purpoſes of civil ſociety, the purpoſes of the great *Author of Nature*, in creating this connection, are anſwered at the ſame time; and with any farther eſtabliſhment of religion, human laws have nothing to do. Whether they have or not? is the queſtion. And hereupon, the writer of the *Letter to the Biſhop of* Clogher, very pertinently aſks, *Who* is the judge? That is to ſay, who is the judge, how fat it may be neceſſary to eſtabliſh religion by human laws?

To this the Defender anſwers without heſitation, "The ſame legiſlative powers, which eſta-"bliſh the one, have a right to eſtabliſh the o-"ther; and to chuſe that religion which they "think to be beſt [*Y*]."

Where it muſt be ſuppoſed, that the great *Author of Nature* hath left it as free for Magiſtrates, and Legiſlators, to eſtabliſh by human Laws, what doctrines or modes of religion they

[*Y*] Defence of the *Eſſay on ſpirit*, p. 3.

chuſe, or find expedient for ſecular utility; as it is for them to chuſe what modes of civil ſociety they find convenient. Which indeed is to ſuppoſe, that there never was any *authentic* revelation of true religion in the world. For as ſurely as God has revealed true religion, ſo ſurely has he inhibited Magiſtrates, and all others from eſtabliſhing any thing *contrary* to it, or *deviating* from it.

But by what is ſaid in the *Dedication* prefixed to the *eſſay on ſpirit*, the *Defender*, moſt likely, would confine this *right* of the legiſlative powers, to the inforcing of an *Uniformity of Profeſſion* only.

But it has been ſhewn above, that in this view, the eſtabliſhment of religion will afford no aid to civil laws; in as much as he who profeſſes one thing, and believes another, will derive none of that influence from his *profeſſion*, which is neceſſary to ſupply the unavoidable defects of civil ordinances. Not to mention, that if the great *Author of Nature* founded the welfare and ſupport of ſociety, on no ſurer baſis of religion than this, it hardly ſeems worthy of his infinite wiſdom to have interpoſed in this matter at all.

But indeed, both the wiſdom and goodneſs of our benevolent Creator are moſt ungraciouſly miſrepreſented by this author. Upon his principles, whatever right Chriſtian Legiſlators have to eſtabliſh *what religion they chuſe for the beſt*, the the ſame had the Pagan Legiſlators. Suppoſe theſe

theſe then to have extended their eſtabliſhment no farther than to an *uniformity of Profeſſion*, what were St. *Paul's* converts to do? were they to comply with the modes of the times, and *profeſs* themſelves idolaters? This the Apoſtle prohibits in expreſs terms; and herein ventures to counteract this right of the civil legiſlative powers. And no doubt upon good authority.

When we apply this theory of religious eſtabliſhments to our own circumſtances, the caſe will ſtand thus. Our legiſlative powers have a right to eſtabliſh human forms of religion, ſo far at leaſt as to require uniformity of profeſſion. This right they have exerciſed, and this right they have from the great *Author of Nature*. The conſequence is, that all Diſſenters from theſe eſtabliſhed forms, that is, all who diſclaim the *profeſſion*, as well as the *belief* of them, are not only offenders againſt civil peace and order, but wicked oppoſers of the authority of God himſelf. This indeed has been charged upon them by our zealous church-memorialiſts with all freedom. The civil powers have however granted them a *toleration*, which we may be ſure they would not have done, unleſs they had entertained more qualified ſentiments concerning *their own* rights; as well as more accurate conceptions of the welfare and ſupport of ſociety, than this Defender of the *Eſſay on Spirit* exhibits.

But to conclude this chapter. There is one particular weakneſs and want of forecaſt, com-

mon to all theſe pleaders for latitude. If you take their ſeveral ſchemes, as they are founded upon the church's declarations, nothing can be more righteous or reaſonable than to comply with the terms preſcribed by the church; and then, *perfectly conſiſtent is the reaſonableneſs of conformity, with the rights of private judgment.* But go back to their principles of Chriſtian Liberty, on which they oppoſe the Advocates for Church-authority, and you will find there is nothing more inconſiſtent with thoſe principles, than the Authority which the church of *England* actually claims and exerciſes.

The high Churchmen, *Rogers*, *Stebbing*, *Hare*, *Waterland*, *Potter*, *Snape*, and their retainers, claim no privileges for the Church of *England*, which ſhe does not actually enjoy, nor any powers which ſhe does not actually exerciſe. Their proofs are accordingly directed to ſhew, that ſhe *rightly* enjoys and exerciſes theſe privileges and powers.

When therefore their opponents had ſhewn, that the church had no ſuch privileges or powers of *right*; conſiſtency required that they ſhould have withdrawn from a church, which uſurped an authority that did not belong to her, and to have born their teſtimony againſt her in DEEDS, as well as WORDS.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

An attempt to diſcover whence the practice of ſubſcribing the XXXIX *Articles in different ſenſes, was derived; and by what ſort of caſuiſts, and what ſort of reaſoning it was firſt propagated, and has been ſince eſpouſed.*

IT is a fact in which our hiſtorical writers of all parties agree, that, during the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and for ſome part of the reign of King *James* I. there was no difference between the epiſcopal churchmen, and the puritans, in matters of *doctrine*. The Conteſts between the Biſhops and the Puritans of thoſe times concerning ſubſcription, aroſe from thoſe articles which aſſerted the powers of an epiſcopal Hierarchy, and an authority to preſcribe and injoin rites and ceremonies. To theſe forms of Church Government the Puritans had, as they thought, unanſwerable objections; and therefore would never ſubſcribe thoſe articles, which approved them, without exceptions and limitations.

The Parliament of 1572, ſeems to have thought theſe objections of the Puritans reaſonable; and accordingly in the Act of that year, injoining ſubſcription, thoſe Articles are required to be ſubſcribed, which *only concern the confeſſion of the true faith, and the ſacraments.* And when Archbiſhop *Parker* took upon him to expoſtulate with ſome members of the Houſe of Commons, for leaving

out *the reſt*, he was anſwered, "that they were "not ſatisfied concerning their agreement with "the Word of God [*A*]."

The Biſhops however, who were the perſons appointed by law, to take the ſecurity of ſubſcription from the candidates for the miniſtry, artfully found the means of evading this moderation of the Parliament, by making certain canons, in conſequence of which, ſubſcription was exacted to *all* the Articles without exception. Theſe canons are to be found in *Sparrow's* collection, under the title of *Liber quorundam canonum, anno* 1571 [*B*]."

The Queen, it ſeems, (for what reaſon does not appear) could not be prevailed with to ratify theſe canons in form; and they were framed likewiſe, and made public without the *royal licenſe*, requiſite in ſuch caſes. They had however her Ma-

[*A*] *Strype's* Life of *Parker*, p. 394. See alſo *Selden's* Table-talk.

[*B*] That is, according to the eccleſiaſtical computation; but they were not publiſhed till after the act was paſt. In the firſt of theſe Canons, ſubſcription is injoined in theſe words, *ita tamen ut ſubſcribant articulis Chriſtianæ religionis, publice in ſynodo approbatis, fidemque dent, ſe velle tueri et defendere* DOCTRINAM EAM, QUAE IN ILLIS CONTINETUR, *ut conſentientiſſimam veritati verbi divini*; which ſeems to be much the ſame with the ſubſcription injoined by the Act. But under the title, *Concionatores*, the Candidate is to confirm, by his ſubſcription, *the Book of Common-prayer*, and *the Book of Ordination*, &c. And upon this injunction were modelled four articles, called in thoſe days, *The Biſhop's Articles*, the three firſt of which were much the ſame with thoſe in our 36th Canon.

jeſty's

jeſty's *verbal* approbation, or rather perhaps her *connivance*; with which, by the way, *Grindal* then Archbiſhop of *York*, was by no means ſatisfied, and very probably, never ventured to carry them into execution within his own Dioceſe [C].

The Puritans oppoſed *this* ſubſcription with all their might. None of them, that I can find, refuſed to ſubſcribe according to Act of Parliament; that is to ſay, to ſubſcribe the *doctrinal* and *ſacramental* articles. They, among them, who ſubſcribed them *all*, never omitted to make ſome exception, or proteſtation, with reſpect to the articles which concerned church-government or diſcipline. Where this was not allowed, they refuſed to ſubſcribe at all, and choſe rather to undergo what the Biſhops *thought fit* to inflict upon them. I ſay *thought fit*; for, certain it is, that the ſaid Biſhops, had *then* no legal authority to ſilence, impriſon, or deprive, as they did, great numbers of thoſe who refuſed to ſubſcribe *their* articles.

Theſe facts are ſufficiently proved by Mr. *Pierce*, in his *vindication of the Diſſenters*. For the preſent however, I chuſe to appeal to a teſtimony leſs exceptionable to churchmen, I mean *Thomas Rogers*, in the dedication of his expoſition of the xxxix Articles to Archbiſhop *Bancroft*, publiſhed 1607. Where, though he extolls the Biſhops, and reviles the Puritans with the moſt abject ſycophantry, he hath nevertheleſs repreſented

[C] See *Strype's* Life of *Parker*, p. 322.

the matter ſo, as to ſhew, with ſufficient perſpicuity, that the Puritans might, with great truth and propriety, have ſaid to *Elizabeth*, what the Hebrew officers pleaded to *Pharaoh*, Exod. v. 16. *Behold thy ſervants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people.*

Upon the acceſſion of *James*, things went on pretty much in the ſame way, till after the *Hampton-Court-Conference*, and the publication of the Canons of 1604. When, as we are informed by *Rogers*, certain of the brethren, meaning the Puritans, refuſed to ſubſcribe, not only to the Hierarchical Articles, but to the reſt likewiſe, "becauſe the purpoſe or intention of the church, "if not her doctrine were ſomewhat varied, [from "what they were in time of Queen *Elizabeth*,] in "proof of which they alledged the late book of "Canons, the book of Conference, (meaning "Biſhop *Barlow's* account of the Conference at "*Hampton-Court*) and ſome ſpeeches of men in "great place, and others [*D*]."

I do not remember to have ſeen any mention made of this ſcruple of the Puritans, in any other hiſtory or account of thoſe times; and as it is the firſt inſtance of their refuſing to ſubſcribe the *doctrinal* articles of the church, it may be worth the while to look a little farther into it, and to find out, if we can, the nature and cauſe of this new ſcruple.

[*D*] See *Rogers's* Dedication, Sect. 34, 35.

Rogers's

Rogers wiſely ſays nothing to the particulars of this objection; that is, nothing of the *Canons*, or the paſſages in the *book of conference*, which had given offence. He was writing a fulſome dedication to *Bancroft*, the father of all this new miſchief. To have entered into the merits of the complaint, might have diſturbed his patron. We are obliged to him indeed, that he would mention this matter at all; and cannot but do him the juſtice to acknowledge, that he hath acquitted himſelf of the difficulty upon his hands by a very dextrous quibble; *viz.* "that the "*words* of the articles being ſtill the ſame, the "doctrine, purpoſe, and intention of the church "muſt be the ſame likewiſe." And if the Puritans would not be impoſed on by this ſophiſm, it was none of his fault.

But to come to the point. The regal ſupremacy, as extended to eccleſiaſtical matters, and eſpecially in the hands of a woman, was an eyeſore from the beginning to the Puritans, as well as to the Papiſts. This obliged *Parker*, in reviewing *Edward's* Articles in 1562, to add a pretty long explanation, to the article concerning the *Civil Magiſtrate*, importing, "that the "miniſtring either of God's word, or of the ſa"craments were not given to our Prince, — but "only that prerogative which we ſee to have "been given always, to all godly Princes in the "holy ſcriptures, by God himſelf;" meaning the godly Princes of *Judah* and *Iſrael*. Article thirty-ſeven.

With this explanation the Puritans had reaſon to be (and probably were) ſatisfied. When the Kings of *Iſrael* and *Judah* interfered with the ſacred office of the Prieſthood, farther than they were warranted by the law of *Moſes*, they ceaſed to be *godly* Princes; and ſo long as our own Princes kept themſelves within the like bounds, their ſupremacy was liable to no abuſe. Should it prove otherwiſe, the Puritans had no objection to the doctrine of reſiſtance; or the lawfulneſs of transferring dominion from *ungodly* Princes to the *pious* and *elect*.

But theſe doctrines *James* could by no means reliſh. He knew not in what light he might ſtand with his people in proceſs of time. If in the light of a *reprobate*, here was a door left open for transferring his crown to a better man.

Bancroft therefore took care to ſalve this matter in the canon which enjoined ſubſcription, by adding to the authority of the godly Kings in ſcripture, that of the *Chriſtian Emperors* in the primitive church, *godly* or *ungodly*; and at the ſame time veſting *James* with the ſupremacy in ALL cauſes eccleſiaſtical and civil [*E*].

[*E*] See Canon ii. xxxvi. and lv. The Article to be ſubſcribed to, concerning the Queen's [*Elizabeth's*] ſupremacy, in the injunction appealed to in our thirty-ſeventh Article, was thus worded: "The Queen's Majeſty is the chief Governour, "next under Chriſt, of this church of *England*, as well in ec-"cleſiaſtical as civil cauſes." Which may be compared with the firſt of the three Articles, enjoined to be ſubſcribed by our thirty-ſixth Canon.

This

This alteration put matters upon a very different footing, and made no ſmall variation in the doctrine of the church. It is but dipping into the imperial law, wherever it opens at an eccleſiaſtical caſe, to be convinced, that the *Chriſtian* Emperors far outſtripped the Jewiſh Kings, in the powers they claimed and exerciſed over the church [*F*]. But,

2. The paſſage in *the Book of Conference*, which gave offence, was chiefly this. In the ſixteenth Article of our church it is ſaid, that *after we have received the Holy Ghoſt we may fall from grace.* Dr. *Reynolds*, imagined this might ſeem to croſs the doctrine of *Predeſtination*, unleſs ſome ſuch words were added as, *yet neither totally, nor finally*, which he deſired might be done by way of explanation. He likewiſe deſired that the nine *Lambeth* Articles, drawn up by *Whitgift*, might be inſerted in the book of Articles.

Dr. *Bancroft* was highly provoked at this, and obſerved, "that very many in thoſe days, neg-"lecting holineſs of life, preſumed too much on "perſiſting in grace; laying all their religion on "Predeſtination; *if I ſhall be ſaved, I ſhall be "ſaved:* which he termed a *deſperate* doctrine, "ſhewing it to be contrary to good divinity, and "the true doctrine of *Predeſtination*; wherein we

[*F*] They who chooſe not to turn over voluminous codes of the imperial law, may find what is here advanced tolerably well made out in Father *Paul's* Hiſtory of Beneficiary Matters.

"ſhould

" ſhould rather reaſon *aſcendendo*, than *deſcendendo*, " thus, *I live in obedience to God, in love with my* " *neighbour; I follow my vocation*, &c. *therefore I* " *truſt God hath elected me, and predeſtinated me to* " *ſalvation.* Not thus, which is the uſual courſe " of argument, *God hath predeſtinated me to life;* " *therefore, though I ſin never ſo grievouſly, yet I* " *ſhall not be damned*; for *whom he loveth, he lov-* " *eth to the end.* Whereupon, he ſhewed his " Majeſty, out of the next article, what was the " doctrine of the church of *England* touching " Predeſtination, in the very laſt paragraph; " namely, we muſt receive God's promiſes in " ſuch wiſe, as they be generally ſet forth to us " in the holy ſcriptures; and, in our doings, *that* " will of God is to be followed, which we have " expreſsly declared unto us in the word of God" [G].

The Biſhop was much in the right, to ſhew his Majeſty only the *very laſt paragraph* of the ſeventeenth Article. Had he turned the King's attention to the foregoing paragraphs, his Majeſty would have ſeen, that his learned harangue was rank *Arminianiſm*, and a flat contradiction to the ſaid Article; which actually argues, as the Biſhop termed it, *deſcendendo*; inferring *the walk-*

[G] *Phœnix*, vol. I. p. 151.

ing

ing religiouſly in good works, and attaining to everlaſting felicity, from *previous predeſtination* [*H*].

When it came to the royal moderator's turn to determine this matter between the two parties, he contented himſelf with ſhuffling it off as well as he could. He choſe not to diſoblige the Biſhops; and yet in his own opinions was a rigid Calviniſt, at this period at leaſt. But however, as he began with *approving very well* what *Bancroft* ſhewed him in the laſt paragraph of the Article, it is probable that this, and his refuſing to admit the *Lambeth* Articles into the public confeſſion, might be among the *ſpeeches of ſome great ones*, from which the Puritans concluded, that the *purpoſe* and *intention*, if not the *doctrine*

[*H*] A certain pamphleteer, having objected to the Engliſh Clergy, that they ſubſcribed Articles which they did not believe; Dr. *George Fothergill* of *Oxford* undertook their defence, in the poſtſcript or appendix to a *Faſt*-ſermon preached before that univerſity, February 17, 1758. His aim is to ſhew, that the Articles are not Calviniſtical; and one of his arguments is the "non-acquieſcence of the Calviniſts in the preſent ſet of "Articles, and their repeated attempts either to get them "worded more ſtrictly, or to have others ſuperadded more de-"terminate in their favour." It is plain he had this motion of Dr. *Reynolds* in his eye, and probably took the hint from *Heylin* and *Montague*, whom he refers to, without knowing, or perhaps caring to know, how theſe writers had been refuted by *Carleton*, *Hickman*, and others. It appears, however, that the ſeventeenth Article aſſerts Calviniſtical Predeſtination *deſcendendo* in poſitive terms, and is ſo far, according to *Bancroft*, falſe divinity. And, if the very laſt paragraph is *Arminian*, what will Dr. *Fothergill* get by ſhewing that he and his brethren ſubſcribe *ex animo* to contradictions?

of

of the church, had varied from what it had been.

And let me remark, that theſe ſame Puritans, in refuſing to ſubſcribe the *doctrinal* Articles, when they ſaw this inclination in the Biſhops to put a new conſtruction upon them, ſeem to have underſtood the nature of the caſe much better than our modern ſubſcribers. What the Biſhops *then* aimed at (and what their ſucceſſors have *ſince* accompliſhed), was to bring men to a ſimple implicit ſubſcription, without any reſerve or limitation whatever. The Puritans had all along ſubſcribed the Articles with various proteſts and exceptions againſt thoſe which related to *diſcipline*. And theſe exceptions the Biſhops, in ſome caſes at leaſt, admitted. The *doctrinal* Articles were ſubſcribed by all parties without reſerve; becauſe the opinions of all parties were tolerably uniform with reſpect to the ſubject-matter of them. But now the caſe was altered. This *variation* in the purpoſe and intention of the church, made it unſafe for the Puritans to ſubſcribe the doctrinal Articles implicitly, or without reſerve. They did not think, as the generality of ſubſcribers ſeem to think now, that they might be allowed to abound in their own ſenſe, in what form ſoever they ſubſcribed. They were wiſer. They knew that the Biſhops, taking upon them to interpret the Articles, in the manner *Bancroft* had done at the Conference, would put what conſtruction they pleaſed

pleaſed upon their ſubſcription, againſt which they had found by experience, all their ſubſequent remonſtrances would ſignify nothing. They knew, in ſhort, the Biſhops had ſuppreſſed the proteſtations they had made with reſpect to the diſciplinarian Articles, and proceeded againſt them as *revolters*, and as though they had ſubſcribed *all* the Articles *implicitly*. And therefore they wiſely avoided the ſnare, and kept themſelves out of their power [*I*].

It does not appear, however, that Archbiſhop *Bancroft* made any farther attempt to introduce Arminianiſm into the church. And one pretty clear proof that he did not, is that he authoriſed *Rogers's* Expoſition in the year 1607; which, as a very competent judge obſerves, went upon the *Calviniſtical frame* [*K*]. The reaſon, probably, was, that he found the King not ſufficiently pliable to come into his notions. Doctrinal matters, therefore, continued ſtill upon the old foundation, notwithſtanding the ſuſpicions of the Puritans, till *Bancroft's* death, which happened in the year 1610.

He was ſucceeded by *George Abbot*, a man of a very different character in all reſpects.

The next year, 1611, happened the ruffle between *James* I. and the States of *Holland*, con-

[*I*] See Pierce's *Vindication*, p. 109, 110.

[*K*] Hickman's Animadverſions on Heylin's Quinq. Hiſt, p. 218.

cerning

cerning *Vorſtius*, who was called by the Univerſity of *Leyden* to ſucceed *Arminius*, as their Divinity profeſſor. The King's remonſtrances againſt this promotion proving ineffectual, his Majeſty thought proper to attempt the confutation of *Vorſtius's* book *de Deo*, in a formal controverſial writing; in which he calls "*Arminius* a ſeditious "and heretical preacher, an infector of *Leyden* "with hereſy, and an enemy of God; and with-"al, he complains of his hard hap, not to hear "of him before he was dead; and that all the "Reformed churches in *Germany* had with open "mouth complained of him [*L*].

[*L*] See *Harris's* Hiſt. and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of James I p. 124. Dr. *Harris* ſays, "*James* is "ſaid to have been excited to declare againſt *Vorſtius* by *Abbot*, "archbiſhop of *Canterbury*; and it is not unlikely. Moſt of "the eccleſiaſtics of that time abounded with a fiery zeal, which "frequently hurried them into actions not to be juſtified." p. 119.——This information comes, it ſeems, from *La Roche*, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 318. but, I apprehend, without the leaſt good authority. *Fuller* ſays not a word of *Abbot's* being concerned in this matter. And *Heylin* makes no remark upon his ſilence, which, attached as he was to the opinions of *Vorſtius*, and rancorouſly diſaffected to *Abbot*, he would certainly have done, had he known of any juſt grounds for the ſtory. *Heylin* himſelf ſays indeed (having juſt mentioned the King's declaration againſt *Vorſtius*, and his Majeſty's animoſity againſt the Remonſtrants) — "Some think, he [*James*] was drawn unto it "by the powerful perſuaſions of Archbiſhop *Abbot*, and Biſhop "*Montague*, who then much governed his counſels in all "church-concernments." *Hiſt. Presb.* p. 402. But, beſides that this relates to the King's *general* diſpoſition towards the Remonſtrants, he immediately ſubjoins three other *conjectures*,

I cite

I cite this paſſage only to ſhew, that King *James*, at this period, was no friend to the *Arminians*.

and adopts the laſt as *moſt rational*, viz. reaſon of ſtate. If Sir *Ralph Winwood* had mentioned the King's being inſtigated againſt *Vorſtius* by *Abbot*, I take it for granted, Dr. *Harris* would have cited him, inſtead of *La Roche*. In the mean time, the compilers of *Abbot's* life, in the *Biographia Britannica*, tell us, that, "When it was found difficult to obtain from the States "that ſatisfaction [in the matter of *Vorſtius*] which the King de-"ſired, his Grace, in conjunction with the Lord Treaſurer "*Salisbury*, framed an expedient for contenting both parties." And for this they cite *Winwood's* Memorials. This does not look like the *fiery zeal* of an *inſtigator*. Not to mention that *Abbot* was too wiſe and too good a man to approve of King *James's* weak and licentious manner of writing againſt *Vorſtius*. That *Abbot* had no cordial affection for the *Arminians*, is very credible and very accountable, inaſmuch as it was the univerſal opinion of the wiſeſt and beſt of men in thoſe times, that *Arminianiſm* was a back-door to Popery; and certain events in our own country have not at all contributed to diſcredit that opinion, as I obſerve below. The Archbiſhop's diſaffection to *Grotius* was owing to the endeavours and propoſals of the latter towards a coalition of the Proteſtants and Papiſts, which every wiſe and conſiſtent Proteſtant, in every period ſince the Reformation, as well as *Abbot*, has conſidered as a *ſnare*, and treated accordingly. In the famous letter of *Abbot's* againſt *Grotius*, preſerved in *Winwood*, the worſt part of that great man's character is taken from the report of others, and might make the worſe impreſſions upon the Archbiſhop's mind, as his Grace was aware of the pernicious tendency of *Grotius's* negotiations with *James* and his *Arminianizing* prelates, particularly by his joining with the latter in advancing maxims in favour of arbitrary power. For the reſt, there never was a prelate freer from the fiery zeal of an eccleſiaſtic, perhaps hardly ever a private clergyman, than *George Abbot*. It was reckoned his diſgrace in the next reign, that he did not tread in the ſteps of the *fiery* Ban-

In the year 1613, *James*, indeed, ſeems to have had more qualified ſentiments concerning the Arminian ſyſtem. He tells the States, in a letter, dated *March* 6th that year, that, "having ſeen, "in a letter ſent to him by the Sieur *Caron*, their "Ambaſſador, the opinions of both parties, and "the arguments by which they are ſupported, "diſcuſſed at large, it did not appear to him, "that either of them were inconſiſtent with the "truth of the Chriſtian faith, and the ſalvation "of ſouls." [*La Roche*, Abridgement, vol. I. p. 325.] Mr. *Harris* likewiſe quotes Sir *Ralph Winwood* for the ſame fact [*M*].

The two Hiſtorians laſt cited, Meſſieurs *La Roche* and *Harris*, call this a contradiction in *James*; and, a contradiction, the latter obſerves, was nothing to him. But, I apprehend, the moſt

croft. "Had *Laud* ſucceeded *Bancroft*," ſaid they, "and the "project of conformity been followed without interruption, the "enſuing ſchiſm might have been prevented." *Fuller's* Worthies, SURRY, p. 83.—"He was ſlack and negligent," ſays the firebrand *Heylin*, "in the courſe of his government, and too "indulgent to that party, which *Bancroft* had kept under with "ſuch juſt ſeverity." *Hiſt. Presb.* p. 389.—If to this we add, the noble ſtand he made againſt the Spaniſh match; his unwearied endeavours and vigilance againſt popery; his ſpirited letter to *James* I. on that ſubject; and his not only refuſing to licenſe, but confuting the poſitions in *Sibthorp's* ſermon;—theſe particulars, and his uniform adherence to the ſame principles during his whole life, oblige me to wiſh that ſo undeſerved a cenſure upon ſo excellent a perſon had not eſcaped the pen of ſo liberal a ſpirited writer as Dr. *Harris*.

[*M*] Life of *James* I. p. 124.

inconſtant

inconſtant man breathing, if he changes his mind ten times in a day, has ſome reaſon or motive for it, which operates *pro hâc vice.*

The caſe appears to have been this. *Grotius* was very fond of a ſcheme he had projected and entertained, of uniting the Roman Catholics and Proteſtants, wherein he was for making conceſſions to the Papiſts, which the Proteſtants abroad would never come into. It appears by a Letter of *Caſaubon* to *Grotius*, which bears date *January* 27, 1612,13, that *Grotius* had ſent ſome papers to *Caſaubon* upon this ſubject, which the latter had communicated to *James*, who greatly approved them; and he tells *Grotius*, that "he had "found many Engliſh Biſhops, eminent for their "piety and learning, who revolved in their "minds night and day the ſame thoughts with "himſelf [*N*]." Which was to ſay, that theſe Biſhops would have made the ſame conceſſions to the Papiſts, that *Grotius* contended for. That *James* was in the ſame way of thinking, is notorious from other documents: particularly his ſpeech to his firſt parliament [*O*]. Probably he had not conſidered how far he muſt depart from the *Confeſſion of faith*, in which he had been educated, before the *healing meaſures* of *Grotius* could take place, till Monſieur *Caron* put into his hands the reſcript he mentions in his letter to the ſtates.

[*N*] Caſaubon's Epiſtles, 655, Edit. *Brunſwick*, 1656.

[*O*] See the ſpeech in *Rapin Thoyras*, and that hiſtorian's remarks upon it.—

At this time too the *Arminians* bid fair for being the triumphant party in the *Low Countries*; *Grotius* and *Barnevelt*, being employed by the States, to draw up the edict intended to reſtore tranquillity between the *Gomariſts* and *Arminians* [*P*], which edict was highly approved of by *James* and his Biſhops [*Q*].

With theſe impreſſions upon his mind, *James* wrote the abovementioned letter to the ſtates.

In the interval between this time, and the aſſembling of the ſynod of *Dort*, our hiſtories afford no intereſting accounts of King *James's* theologi-

[*P*] *Burigni's* Life of *Grotius*, p. 47.

[*Q*] Caſaubon's Epiſt. 800. There is a pretty faithful tranſlation of this Epiſtle in *La Roche's* Abridgment, vol. i. p. 328, who omits no occaſion of doing honour to the Arminians, and ſhame to their adverſaries. In that Letter, *James* and his Biſhops appear to approve the edict without the leaſt exception, and, what is moſt ſurprizing, we find the Archbiſhop of *Canterbury* among them, which muſt be either a miſtake, or have been a piece of Court complaiſance in *Abbot*, who is well known to have oppoſed *Grotius's* project of *reunion*, to which this Edict was preparatory. But *Caſaubon*, epiſt. 795, tells *Grotius*, he had noted one or two paſſages in the edict, which he could have wiſhed, might have been otherwiſe expreſſed. And he tells him in another epiſtle N°. 777, That the form of the edict was much approved in *England*, except a *few things*, concerning which he had taken the liberty to apprize him in another letter. What theſe things were, we learn from *Burigni*, namely, that, "the only thing [in the edict] which gave the "King ſome pain, was to ſee the civil Magiſtrate aſſume a "right of making decrees in matters of religion." Life of *Grotius*, p. 49. *Burigni* cites *Caſaubon's* 863d epiſtle, which is not in my edition. Mr. *La Roche*, if he knew it, ought not to have ſuppreſſed this circumſtance.

cal

cal ſentiments. *Caſaubon*, in one of his letters to *Grotius*, then in *England*, tells him, that the Biſhop of *Bath* and *Wells*, was never from the King's ſide [*R*]. And that the *Arminian* clergy were not wanting, in improving their confidence with the King, appears from the following paſſage: "It "was *inſinuated* to the King, what dangers would "proceed by training up of young ſtudents in the "grounds of *Calviniſm* —; that there was no "readier way to advance the preſbyterial Go-"vernment in this Kingdom, than by ſuffering "young ſcholars to be ſeaſoned with *Calvinian* "doctrines; that it was very hard to ſay, whe-"ther of the two, either the Puritan or the Pa-"piſt, were more deſtructive of Monarchical Go-"vernment [*S*]."

This was touching *James* in a tender part, and procured ſome injunctions to be ſent to *Oxford*, concerning ſubſcription to the three articles in the 36th Canon, concerning the method of ſtudy, and ſome other regulations relative to the demeanour of ſcholars, and their ſchool-exerciſes [*T*]; but nothing to the diſparagement of doctrinal Calviniſm, anſwerable to the expectations of the *inſinuators*.

For by this time, matters had taken a very different turn in *Holland*. Some cities did not approve the edict abovementioned. The Prince of *Orange* had declared againſt the *Arminians*, and

[*R*] Epiſt. 745.

[*S*] *Heylin's* Life of *Laud*. p. 71. *ſub* anno 1616.

[*T*] Ibid. p. 72.

had a large majority both of the magiſtrates and divines on his ſide. And the common cry was, to have theſe diſputes ſettled in a national ſynod. Theſe things (which may be ſeen in *La Roche*, and other Hiſtories) could not fail of making impreſſions upon *James*, and would reſtrain him from declaring in favour of *Arminianiſm*, to which he was, moſt probably, averſe in his heart [*U*].

Accordingly, he choſe ſix Divines to aſſiſt at the ſynod of *Dort*, who were well known to be zealous *Calviniſts*. Theſe, among other things, had it in their inſtructions, "to adviſe thoſe "Churches to uſe no innovation in doctrine, to "teach the ſame things which were taught twen-"ty or thirty years paſt in their own churches— "and nothing which contradicted their own con-"feſſions — to conſult, at all times, his Majeſty's "Ambaſſador, [Sir *Dudley Carleton*] who, ſays "the King, underſtandeth well the queſtions and "differences among them [*W*]."

Theſe Divines concurred with the ſynod in approving and ratifying the Belgic confeſſion [*X*],

[*U*] Dr. *Featly*, according to Mr. *Hickman*, affirmed that King *James*, not many weeks before his death, called the *Arminians* Heretics. *Animadverſions*, 2d Edit. p. 231.

[*W*] "*Grotius*, ſays Mr. *La Roche*, found out [while he was "in England] that the Engliſh Ambaſſador at the *Hague* [the "ſame Sir *Dudley Carleton*] had repreſented to the Archbiſhop "of *Canterbury*, the eccleſiaſtical affairs of *Holland* to the pre-"judice of the Remonſtrants." *Abridgement*, Vol. I. p. 326.

[*X*] In all *doctrinal* points: entering a proteſt, that the Church of England diſapproved ſome of the *diſciplinarian* Canons. *Fuller*, X. p. 81, 82.

and

and conſequently in condemning the Remonſtrants; and when they returned home, were received by *James* with approbation, and courteous entertainment. Three of theſe he afterwards preferred to Biſhopricks, *viz. Hall*, *Carleton*, and *Davenant*; and *Balcanqual*, was made Maſter of the *Savoy*. Theſe particulars may be found in *Fuller's* Church-Hiſtory, and other memorials of thoſe times; and are ſufficient to ſhew, that at this period, and for ſome time after, *James* was no favourer of the *Arminian* Theology.

Perhaps indeed there never was a period, from his firſt acceſſion to the Engliſh Crown, till the day of his death, when he would not have made his divinity bend to his politics. He hated the Puritans, not for their doctrines, but for their diſlike to a Prelacy. He thought a monarchy as neceſſary for the church, as for the ſtate; and had much the ſame idea of *claſſes* and *conſiſtories*, that he had of *Parliaments*. He imagined, that whoever was not a friend to epiſcopal power, muſt have the ſame objections to that of Kings. And perhaps he was not much miſtaken, with reſpect to his own contemporaries.

The Calviniſts in *Holland* ſtrenuouſly inſiſted, that the Church, conſtituted as theirs was, upon a republican model, had the ſole power of defining matters of faith, and of diſtinguiſhing between points neceſſary and unneceſſary; and they held, that the civil magiſtrate was bound to inforce the churches deciſions, and to diſcourage

and ſuppreſs all ſects and hereſies contrary thereunto. They went farther ſtill. They held that the civil magiſtrate who did not his duty in this province, ceaſed to be a child of God, and might be depoſed from his office. And ſome of them carried this matter ſo far, that, upon ſome remiſſneſs in the States to ſuppreſs what they called *the enemies of God*, a deputation had been ſent from the clergy, to offer the ſovereignty of ſix of the ſeven united Provinces, to Queen *Elizabeth* [Y].

It cannot be denied, that many of the Engliſh Puritans entertained the ſame notions. Perhaps the greater part of them in ſecret. When any extraordinary countenance was ſhewn to papiſts, either by *James*, or indeed, before him, by *Elizabeth*, the Puritans gave no obſcure intimations of what they thought of the Government; and the leſs diſcreet among them openly avowed the lawfulneſs of reſiſting ungodly Princes, both in the reigns of *Elizabeth* and *James* *.

The King however was not ſo weak, but that he ſaw plainly, Popery was at no great diſtance from *Arminianiſm*. The bent of the nation lay againſt both. And probably, *Abbot's* influence with him, while it laſted, added to the principles

[Y] *La Roche*, vol. I. p. 229.

* See *Strype's* Life of *Whitgift*, p. 291. And *Puckering's* ſpeech in *Fuller's* Worthies, Tit. *Yorkſhire*, p. 201. *Puckering* without doubt, exaggerated. But his word may be taken with reſpect to the point of the Queen's Supremacy, in eccleſiaſtical cauſes.

(or

(or, if you pleaſe, the *prejudices*) of his own education in *Scotland*, kept him in theſe ſentiments, the rather perhaps as he did not ſee, how what were called the *factious* attempts of the Puritans, were countenanced by the Divinity of *Calvin*.

It muſt be confeſſed, that with ſuch a Prince, the *Arminian* Biſhops had but a difficult game to play; but they managed it like workmen. And in the end, turned even the moſt unfavourable circumſtances to their own account.

Grotius, and the Remonſtrants in *Holland*, pleaded for *Toleration* [Z]; and from their holding this principle, artfully enough ſuggeſted their ſuperior reſpect for the civil powers: as that would keep Church-authority under the hatches.

James had no idea of the righteouſneſs of a toleration. And he ſaw that if it took place in matters of doctrine, it might, upon equally good grounds, be claimed for opinions and practices relating to diſcipline. And perhaps his objection to the edict of the States General, mentioned before from *Burigni*, might be founded upon the *tolerating* powers, veſted by it in the civil magiſtrate.

The *Arminian* Biſhops deteſted *toleration*, as much as *James* could do, and for the ſame reaſons. But went much farther than their brethren in *Holland*, in their conceſſions to the civil power;

[Z] Quinquarticulanam litem, tanti non facerem, niſi conjunctam ſibi haberet eam, quæ eſt de diſcretione neceſſariorum dogmatum a non neceſſariis, ſive de mutua Chriſtianorum tolerantia. *Epiſcopius*, apud *Hickman* Animadverſ. p. 122.

alledging, that ſovereignty, particularly in *Monarchs*, was *jure divino*, and uncontroulable. They knew this principle could do them no harm, qualified as it was, by *James's* notions of *Epiſcopacy*: and for the reſt, it was a ſure bait to draw him in to whatever they might ſee fit to build upon it.

But the great difficulty lay here. They had not only the King, but the people to manage. The Puritan party was ſtrong, and reſpectable for the quality, as well as the numbers, of its adherents. And it would not be ſo eaſily comprehended by the people, how they, who were ſo perfectly right in their divinity, could be ſo far wrong in their Politics. The next ſtep then was to caſt ſome ſlur upon the doctrines of the Puritans, and, if poſſible, to wean both the King and people from their fondneſs for them.

Fuller, in his Church-Hiſtory, informs us, that the Archbiſhop of *Spalato*, was the firſt who uſed the word, *Puritan*, to ſignify the defenders of matters doctrinal, in the Engliſh church. "Formerly, ſays he, the word was only taken to "denote ſuch as diſſented from the Hierarchy in "diſcipline, and church government, which was "now extended to brand ſuch as were *Anti-arminian* in their judgments." And he confeſſes, that the word in this extenſive ſignification, was afterwards improved to aſperſe the moſt orthodox in doctrine, and religious in converſation [*A*].

[*A*] *Fuller*, Ch. Hiſt. B. X. p. 99, 100.

Theſe

Theſe *improvers*, were the *Arminian* Biſhops and their adherents. We have ſeen above, *what* they *inſinuated* to *James*, upon occaſion of obtaining from him certain injunctions ſent to *Oxford*, Anno 1616. But ſtill, the eſtabliſhed Articles of religion, were on the ſide of the *doctrinal* Puritans. The writers againſt *Arminianiſm* made that appear beyond diſpute: and *Laud* himſelf durſt not deny it.

The next ſtep therefore, was to get the Puritan party ſilenced, from preaching or printing any thing upon the ſubject. *Abbot's* influence with King *James* had been broke, by his untractable firmneſs in the matter of the Earl of *Eſſex's* divorce; as well as by other accidents: and a misfortune in his private conduct, had afforded room for the full effect of *Laud's* intrigues, who loſt no opportunity of recommending himſelf and his Syſtem to *James*.

The firſt-fruits of *Laud's* power over the King, appeared in thoſe *injunctions* or directions, bearing date *Auguſt* 4th 1622, wherein among, other things, it was injoined, that "no Preacher, under the degree of a Biſhop or a Dean,—ſhould from thenceforth preſume to preach — the deep points of *Predeſtination*, *Election*, *Reprobation*, or of the *univerſality*, *efficacity*, *reſiſtibility* or *irreſiſtibility* of God's *Grace*, &c. [*B*].

[*B*] *Heylin's* Hiſtory of *Laud*, p. 97, who confeſſes that his Hero had a hand in digeſting and drawing up, theſe injunctions. What cenſures were paſſed upon them may be ſeen

One

One might aſk how *James* could reconcile himſelf to a meaſure, which, in the caſe of the edict of the States-General, had given him pain? That is to ſay, how he could, as *a civil magiſtrate*, aſſume a right of making decrees in matters of religion?

His Divines would have told us, upon this occaſion, 1. That he was a civil magiſtrate *jure divino*; which was not the caſe with *republican* magiſtrates. 2. That by a ſaving clauſe in the end of the *directions*, this was only a kind of *interim*, till the next *Convocation* ſhould aſſemble.

This, however, was all that *James* could be brought to during his reign; unleſs the *Declaration* at the head of the xxxix Articles, is to be aſcribed to him; which however, is a problem I cannot take upon me to ſolve; nor is it very material.

In his ſucceſſor, *Laud* found a King more to his mind. *James* had no perſonal eſteem for *Laud*, and gave him a Biſhoprick with much reluctance. His buſy ſpirit was accordingly, during *James's* reign, obliged to operate in ſubordination to ſome Prelates, who had more of the King's confidence.

But *Charles* I. was wholly at *Laud's* devotion. Hitherto the *Calviniſts* were barely ſilenced, and

in *Wilſon* and *Fuller*, ſub anno 1622, who both give the injunctions at large. Theſe cenſures are acknowledged by *Heylin* himſelf, with great indignation, who, as a leſs ſuſpected witneſs than the others, in theſe points, may be conſulted, p. 99.

perhaps

perhaps hardly that. *Wilſon* tells us, "the Arch-"biſhop recommended it to his Dioceſans, that "theſe directions might be put in execution *with* "*caution* [C]." And *Fuller* ſays, "Theſe in-"ſtructions were not preſſed with equal rigour "in *all* places, and that ſome over-active officials "were more buſy than their Biſhops, &c. [D]." However, it is natural to ſuppoſe theſe injunctions had ſome effect; eſpecially among thoſe who expected to riſe in the Church.

It was not however, ſufficient for *Laud's* purpoſes, barely to ſilence *Calvin*. He wanted to have *Arminius* take the chair, and to dictate to the church of *England*, inſtead of the other.

To try how this would take, he ſets *Montague* to work, a bold, hot headed man (but a good ſcholar *) who ſcrupled not to exemplify, and vow the political, as well as the theological creed of *Arminius*, in the moſt poſitive and explicit terms. Take the ſtory from an unqueſtionable authority.

"Mr. *Richard Montague*, in the one and twen-"tieth of King *James*, had publiſhed a book, "which he named, *A new Gag for an old Gooſe*, "in anſwer to a popiſh book, intituled, *A Gag* "*for the new Goſpel*. The buſineſs was then

[C] Life and Reign of King *James*, p. 201.

[D] Ch. Hiſt X Book, p. 111.

* *Selden* confeſſes he was, *græce ſimul et latine doctus*. *Selden de diis Syris*, p. 361.

"queſtioned

" queſtioned in Parliament [*E*], and and com-
" mitted to the Archbiſhop of *Canterbury* [*Abbot*],
" and ended in an admonition to *Montague*."

" Afterwards the Biſhops of the *Arminian*
" party, conſulted [conſulting] the propagation
" of the five articles condemned in the ſynod of
" *Dort*, concluded that Mr. *Montague*, being al-
" ready engaged in the quarrel, ſhould publiſh
" this latter book [*Appello Cæſarem*], at firſt at-
" teſted by their joint authorities, which after-
" wards they withdrew by ſubtilty, having pro-
" cured the ſubſcription of Dr. *Francis White*
" [Dean of *Carliſle*] whom they left to appear a-
" lone in the teſtimony, as himſelf oft-times com-
" plained publickly. The Archbiſhop diſallow-
" ed the book, and ſought to ſuppreſs it; never-
" theleſs it was printed, and dedicated unto
" King *Charles*, whereby *that party did endeavour*
" *to engage him in the beginning of his reign*. The
" houſe appointed a committee to examine the
" errors therein, and gave the Archbiſhop thanks
" for the admonition given to the author, whoſe
" books they voted to be contrary to the articles
" eſtabliſhed by the Parliament, to tend to the
" King's diſhonour, and diſturbance of church

[*E*] Upon the complaint of two Divines of the Dioceſe of *Norwich*, Mr. *Yates*, and Mr. *Ward*. " They accuſed him of " dangerous errors of *Arminianiſm* and *Popery*, deſerting our cauſe, inſtead of defending it." *Fuller*, Ch. Hiſt. B. XI. p. 119. *Yates* afterwards wrote againſt *Montague*.

" and

"and ſtate, and took bond for his appear-
"ance [*F*]."

Charles at firſt attempted to take *Montague* out of the hands of the Parliament, by claiming him for his chaplain, &c. But afterwards he thought better of it, and determined to leave him at their mercy; which being ſignified to *Laud* by the Duke of *Buckingham*, "he [*Laud*] thought it a "matter of ſuch ominous concernment," ſays *Fuller*, "that he entered the ſame in his *Diary*, "in theſe words: *I ſeem to ſee a cloud ariſe, and* "*threatening the church of* England; *God for his* "*mercy diſſipate it* [*G*]."

But this little ſpirited champion was not ſo to be baffled. He knew the Duke's power with the King, and, in conjunction with the Biſhops of *Rocheſter* and *Oxford*, recommended Mr. *Montague's* cauſe to him, as the cauſe of the church of *England*.

Ruſhworth hath given us the topics they inſiſted on in this recommendation, which I ſhall here tranſcribe; taking leave to intermix ſuch remarks as occur upon the ſeveral particulars of it.

"They ſhew, that ſome of the opinions which "offended many, were no other than the reſolved "doctrine of this church."

Theſe opinions were probably ſuch, as related to the *divine right* of Kings. I have not *Monta-*

[*F*] *Ruſhworth*, vol. I. p. 173.
[*G*] *Church-Hiſt.* Book, p. 121.

gue's

gue's Appeal, but ſuppoſe he might juſtify his doctrines out of the Homilies, Articles, *Bancroft's* Canons, and other documents collected by Biſhop *Bilſon*. When our churchmen *reſolved* theſe points, they were writing againſt the popiſh King-killers. But, not confining themſelves to the confutation of arguments merely popiſh, they made the right of Kings abſolutely *indefeaſible* in *all* caſes; of which *Laud* and his crew made their advantage.

"—— And ſome of them are curious points, "diſputed in the ſchools, and to be left to the "liberty of learned men to abound in their own "ſenſe ——."

Theſe were the *five points* of doctrine, diſputed between the *Calviniſts* and *Arminians*. Could *Laud* have found the means to frame and eſtabliſh a new ſet of Articles, I am perſuaded, he would have left little room for the *Calviniſts to abound in their own ſenſe*. As things were circumſtanced, he was to make the beſt of the preſent ſet, which was, by pleading *in words* for a latitude of ſenſes, and by inſinuating, that theſe diſputed points were matters of no great conſequence, and might be *innocently* held either way. We ſhall ſee by and by how his *actions* contraſted theſe verbal pretences.

"—— It being the great fault of the council "of *Trent* to require ſubſcription to ſchool-opi-"nions, and the approved moderation of the "church

" church of *England*, to refuſe [*perhaps* refute] " the *apparent* dangers and errors of the church " of *Rome*; but not to be overbuſy with ſchola- " ſtical niceties ——."

The council of *Trent* is brought in here only as a ſtalking horſe. The inſinuation is, that the council of *Trent* did, and the church of *England* did *not*, require ſubſcription to *theſe* ſchool-opinions *in a determinate* ſenſe. The very reverſe of which is the honeſt truth. " *Melanchthon*, as " may be ſeen above, accuſed the council of " *Trent* of making *crafty* decrees, that they might " defend their errors by things *ambiguouſly* ſpo- " ken." That is to ſay, by ſuch ambiguities, as permitted the *Jeſuits* and *Dominicans* to abound in their own ſenſe reſpectively, upon theſe very ſchool-points [*H*]. And when *Grotius* came to plead the cauſe of the *Arminians* before the Magiſtrates of *Amſterdam*, he alledged, among other things, " that the doctrines diſputed in *Holland*, " had not been decided by the church of *Rome*, " (and conſequently not by the council of *Trent*) " though ſhe is extremely fond of deciſions." Which doctrines were the very ſame with the *ſchool-opinions* diſputed in *England* [*I*]. On the other hand, the *apparent dangers and errors* of the church of *Rome*, were doctrines and practices,

[*H*] See above, *chap.* iv. p. 86. See likewiſe, *Heylin's* Quinquarticular Hiſt. p. 26. and *Hickman's* Animad. p. 42.

[*I*] *La Roche*, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 344.

ſo founded upon the *Arminian* ſide of theſe ſchool-niceties, that the church of *England* did not think the *apparent errors or dangers* could be refuſed or refuted, without determining theſe *ſchool-niceties* the other way. Which was accordingly done in the xxxix Articles. Was *Laud* ignorant of all this, or was he playing the Jeſuit? And, of all things, that *he* ſhould talk of the *moderation* of the church of *England!*

" —— Moreover, *in the preſent caſe*, they al-
" ledge, that in the time of *Henry* VIII. when the
" clergy ſubmitted to the King's ſupremacy, the
" ſubmiſſion was ſo reſolved, that, in caſe of any
" difference in the church, the King and the Bi-
" ſhops were to determine the matter, in a na-
" tional ſynod."

But, who made the difference in the church *in the preſent caſe?* Theſe very Biſhops. And was it not moſt reaſonable, that they ſhould be both Judges and Parties? But this was calculated for the meridian of *Charles's* apprehenſion; and to furniſh him with an argument for taking *Montague's* cauſe out of the hands of the Parliament.

" —— And if any other judge in matters of
" doctrine be now allowed, we depart from the
" ordinance of Chriſt, and the continual practice
" of the church."

Had the Parliament called for this *ordinance of Chriſt*, where would theſe Prelates have found it? Had they forgot that K. *Henry* VIII, ſo lately quoted,

quoted, paſſing by the Biſhops, and the national Synod, made the Univerſities of *Europe* judges in a very important point of doctrine?

" ——Herewithal they intimated, that, if the " church be once brought down below herſelf, " even Majeſty itſelf would ſoon be impeached."

No Biſhop, no King.

" —— They ſay farther, that K. *James*, in " his rare wiſdom, approved *all* the opinions in " this book."

Perhaps ſome tolerably juſt notion may be formed from what goes before, what opinions, concerning the five points, *James* approved. It is highly probable he continued a Calviniſt *in judgment*, even to the very laſt. No doubt but he approved *Montague's* political principles.

" —— And that moſt of the contrary opinions " were debated at *Lambeth*, and ready to be pub- " liſhed, but were ſuppreſſed by Q. *Elizabeth*."

And were theſe opinions only *debated* at *Lambeth?* or only *ready* to be publiſhed? Surely *Bancroft* gave a different account of them at the *Hampton-Court* Conference. Theſe Biſhops would have it believed, that Queen *Elizabeth* ſuppreſſed theſe Articles, out of a diſlike to the the ſubject-matter of them. Whereas the diſlike was to *the method* uſed in the procuring of them, and the Archbiſhop's ſending them to *Cambridge*, to be diſputed in the ſchools. She was certainly diſpleaſed with *Peter Baro*, for eſpouſing the con-

trary doctrines, which indeed gave the firſt occaſion of framing theſe Articles. And *Baro* being proſecuted in the Vicechancllor's court at *Cambridge*, for contradicting theſe Articles, after *Whitgift* had received orders to *ſuſpend* them, the Queen's *ſuppreſſion* could amount to a very ſmall matter, ſince it is plain they ſtill continued to have their currency in *Cambridge*, as much as before [*K*].

" — And ſo continued [*i. e.* to be ſuppreſſed] " till of late they received countenance at the " ſynod of *Dort*, which was a ſynod of another " nation, and, to us, no way binding, till received " by public authority."

That King *James* did not *continue to ſuppreſs* the *Lambeth* Articles, is plain from his ſending them to *Dort*, as part of the doctrine of the church of *England*; and to *Ireland*, where they were incorporated with *their* Articles of Religion. And Mr. *Pym*, in his ſpeech in Parliament, *Janu.* 27, 1628, ſays expreſsly, *They were avowed by us and our ſtate* [*L*]. On the other hand, one would wonder, what, in the opinion of theſe Biſhops, amounted to " receiving the ſynod of *Dort* by " public authority." King *James* ſent, by a formal deputation, ſix of his Divines to that Synod, who concurred with it in its deciſions, concern-

[*K*] *Strype's* Life of *Whitgift*, book iv. chap. xvii, xviii. See likewiſe *Sykes's* Reply to *Waterland's* Supplement.

[*L*] *Ruſhworth*, vol. I. p. 647.

ing

ing all doctrinal matters. The King approved what they had done, and no churchmen in the kingdom were more favoured by him. This puts me in mind of Mr. *Le Clerc's* obſervation upon the conduct of the *French* Divines in regard to the council of *Trent*. In their public ſcholaſtic diſputations, they cite the canons of that council, as deciſive againſt the heterodox ſide of theological queſtions. But, being preſſed with the abſurdity of ſome of thoſe canons, by their Proteſtant adverſaries, their cant is, that the council of *Trent* was never received in *France* [*M*].

"—— And they boldly affirm, that they "cannot conceive what uſe there can be of civil "government in the commonwealth, or of exter-"nal miniſtry in the church, if ſuch fatal opini-"ons, as ſome are, which are oppoſite to thoſe "delivered by Mr. *Montague*, be publicly taught "and maintained."

This may paſs for what it is, *a bold affirmation*, and no more; calculated to blacken the Puritan party, and to inſinuate, that nothing they held, either with reſpect to religion or politics, could poſſibly be right.

"Such," ſays *Ruſhworth*, "was the opinion "of theſe forenamed Biſhops; but others of

[*M*] Defenſe des Sentimens, &c. ſur l'Hiſt. Critique, *Lett.* xiii.

"eminent learning were of a different judg-
"ment [*N*].

And no wonder. It would be no eaſy matter to ſhew ſo much prevarication in reaſoning, or ſo much falſhood and miſrepreſentation of Facts, in any other reſcript of the ſame length.

The event of this matter was, that *Montague* in the end was delivered from parliamentary puniſhment by a royal pardon. And, after the diſſolution of the Parliament, *Laud* had *Charles* in his hands, and molded him which way he would.

Laud, accordingly, got the prohibition to preach upon theſe controverted points, extended to Deans and Biſhops; in conſequence of which Biſhop *Davenant* was convened before the council, where he was reprimanded by *Harſnet*, Archbiſhop of *York*, for tranſgreſſing his Majeſty's Declaration, in a Lent-ſermon at Court, 1626. (the crafty *Laud* walking by the while, without ſpeaking one word). *Davenant* inſiſted, that he had not broken the Declaration; and they could not contradict him, but were forced to fly to his Majeſty's *intention*, which turned out to be, "that "he would not have this high point [of Prede-"ſtination] meddled withall, or debated, either "the one way or the other [*O*]." It was but a very little before, that *Laud* had ſaid, "theſe cu-

[*N*] *Ruſhworth*, vol. I. p. 177.
[*O*] *Fuller's* Church Hiſt. B. xi. p. 138—141.

"rious

"rious points ſhould be left to the liberty of "learned men, *to abound in their own ſenſe.*" But the Parliament, which differed from him on this head, was now diſſolved, and moſt probably *Laud* never expected to ſee another.

I hope, the foregoing particulars may be ſufficient to ſhew, that ſubſcribing with a latitude, or taking particular Articles in different ſenſes, was an artifice of Archbiſhop *Laud's*, to open a way for his own *Arminian* opinions.

He hath been followed, however, by many in this practice, who have neither had his views, nor approved his example, in other things; and who therefore muſt be ſuppoſed to have ſome reaſons of their own, to determine them in a practice, which, at firſt ſight, is hardly defenſible. Let us conſider what theſe reaſons may be.

1. Then, it is generally underſtood, that the points in diſpute between the *Arminians* and the *Calviniſts*, are points of no conſequence, and may be held either way, without any detriment to the true faith.

Dr. *Nicholls* calls them, "Theological points, "which do not affect the main of religion." So did *Heylin* before him; and he had it undoubtedly from his maſter *Laud*. King *James* too, once upon a time, thought fit to ſay, "that, if the "ſubject of *Vorſtius's* Hereſies [in his book *de* "*Deo*] had not been grounded upon queſtions of "higher quality, than touching the number and "nature of the ſacraments, the points of *merit*,

" of *juſtification*, of purgatory, of the viſible head " of the church, or any ſuch matters, we ſhould " never have troubled ourſelves with the buſi- " neſs."

Upon which, Mr. *Tindal*, the tranſlator of *Rapin Thoyras*, thus deſcants: " As if wrong no- " tions or errors concerning the *eſſence* of God, " were more pernicious, than ſuch corrupt no- " tions and principles, as are deſtructive of mo- " rality, and repugnant to God's moral chara- " cter [*P*]." Such, I ſuppoſe, as Mr. *Tindal* takes the notions and principles of the *Calviniſts* (among others) to be; and conſequently eſteems them points of great importance. It is much, however, if *Vorſtius* or his followers did not draw ſome concluſions of the *moral* kind, from their ſpeculations on the *eſſence* of God.

Biſhop *Burnet*, in his travels, met with an eminent Divine among the *Lutherans* in *Germany*, upon whom he preſſed an union with the *Calviniſts*, as neceſſary upon many accounts. To which the ſaid Divine anſwered, that " He wondered " much to ſee a Divine of the church of *Eng-* " *land*, preſs that ſo much on him, when we, " notwithſtanding the dangers we were then in, " could not agree our differences. They differed " about *important* matters, concerning the attri- " butes of God and his providence; concerning " the guilt of ſin, whether it was to be charged

[*P*] *Tindal's* Rapin, 8vo. 1730. vol. IX. p. 333.

" on

" on God, or the ſinner; and whether men ought " to make good uſe of their faculties, or if they " ought to truſt entirely to an irreſiſtible grace. " Theſe were matters of great moment. But, he " ſaid, we in *England* differed only about forms " of government and worſhip, and things which " were of their own nature indifferent, &c." [Q].

It would be a very ſtrange thing, if the ſcriptures, rightly underſtood, ſhould give any *real* occaſion to the queſtion, whether the guilt of ſin is to be charged on God or the ſinner? But if occaſion is given for ſuch a diſpute, whether *real* or *imaginary*, it is doubtleſs a point of high importance: ſince no ſuch queſtion can be decided, without bringing the ſupreme God into judgment, as a party, with one of his creatures, and ſubjecting him to the ſentence of another of them. The ſcriptures, in truth, give no juſt occaſion for any ſuch controverſy. But if occaſion is taken for ſuch diſputes from Creeds, Confeſſions, and Articles of religion of human device; and if, in particular, ſuch a diſpute may be raiſed from the expreſs terms of our own Articles, ſhould not a ſerious and conſiderate man be cautious how he ſubſcribes them? Would it not be inexcuſeably raſh to take it for granted, that they contain matters of no conſequence?

Perhaps, our preſent ſubſcribers are generally, though not univerſally, of the *Arminian* perſuaſion.

[Q] Preface to *Burnet's* Expoſ. at the end.

I mean,

I mean, ſuch of them as are of *any* perſuaſion at all. For, I doubt, few of them conſider (if indeed they know) the difference between *that* and the perſuaſion of the *Calviniſts*. Surely it concerns ſuch ſubſcribers not a little to be ſatisfied, whether our preſent Articles are truly and properly capable of an *Arminian* ſenſe or not. But of this more by and by.

2. Another thing which draws in ſubſcribers of the preſent generation, is, that, whereas *Arminianiſm* was heretofore eſteemed to be the back-door to popery and arbitrary power, that notion has, upon examination, been found to be utterly groundleſs, and the opinions ſo called, abſolutely innocent of the charge.

"*Rapin*," ſays Mr. *Tindal* in a note, "as well "as moſt of our writers, eſpecially thoſe of the "Puritan party, ſeem to confound two things, "which have no manner of relation to each o-"ther, *viz.* Arminianiſm, and High-church "principles." He then puts down five propoſitions, which, according to him, contain the Arminian doctrine, which the Synod of *Dort*, in their wiſdom, thought fit to condemn. After which he ſays, "Now nothing can be more evi-"dent, than that a man may embrace all theſe "opinions, without being one jot the more a "friend to popery, or arbitrary power [*R*]."

[*R*] *Tindal's* Rapin, *ut ſupra*, vol. X. p. 16.

Mr.

Mr. *Tindal* ſhould not have been ſo poſitive! He did not ſo much as know what the five *Arminian* points, condemned at the Synod of *Dort*, were; as any one may be ſatisfied by comparing the propoſitions Mr. *T.* hath exhibited, with the genuine ones in *La Roche's* Abridgment of *Brandt*.

The *Calviniſts* too, certainly, inferred the lawfulneſs of reſiſting wicked and unrighteous Princes, from their theological principles of *Election* and *Grace*.

Heylin ſays, that *Calvin* called the contrary doctrine *civil idolatry* [*S*]. And *Grotius*, artfully enough, improved the prejudices which Magiſtrates would entertain againſt theſe unprincely notions, to the advantage of his own party, by inſinuating the infinite reverence which the principles of the *Arminians* obliged them to have for the civil powers. The Engliſh *Arminians* went ſtill farther. By excluding *Election* from any ſhare in the foundation of Dominion, and ſubſtituting indefeaſible hereditary right *jure divino* in its place, reſiſtance, even to a *Nero* or a *Caligula*, became a damnable ſin. *Laud*, as we have ſeen, affirmed bolply, that *civil* Government would be uſeleſs, if ſome *fatal* opinions, oppoſite to thoſe of *Montague*, were to prevail. And Mr. *Tindal* himſelf confeſſes, that *Laud*, *Neile*, and *Montague*, were for ſetting the King above the Laws. And

[*S*] Hiſtory of the Preſbyterians, in the beginning.

I know

I know ſome very worthy and eminent perſons, warm and faſt friends to the civil and religious rights of mankind, who are of opinion to this hour, that reſiſtance, even to wicked Princes, cannot be juſtified upon religious principles, without having recourſe to the theological doctrines of the ancient Puritans and Independants.

If the *Arminians* have learned to ſeparate the divinity of their forefathers from their politics, it is ſo much the better for the public. But, I fear, they have not been altogether ſo ſucceſsful in weeding their doctrine from the ſeeds of Popery.

That caſe ſtands thus: The ſcandalous traffic of Indulgences gave the firſt occaſion to *Luther* to diſcover the corruptions of Popery, and afforded him the firſt grounds of his oppoſition to them. But *Indulgences* were founded on the *Merit* of Good-works, and that again on *Freewill*; and, what is more, were ſo founded by St. *Paul's* own reaſoning: *To him that worketh is the reward not of grace, but of debt* [*T*].

The Reformers univerſally, in a greater or leſs degree, purſued *Luther's* ſcheme of interpretation. They thought they had very good grounds in ſcripture for excluding *Freewill* from any ſhare in the work of juſtification. And therefore, when the *Arminians* aroſe, the Puritans apprehended, with great reaſon, that, by opening a door to *Free-agency*, it would be impoſſible to

[*T*] *Rom.* iv. 4.

prevent

prevent Purgatory, Saint-worſhip, Indulgences, &c. from breaking in along with it. And they who will take the pains to read *Montague's* Appeal, and *Heylin's* Introduction to his Life of Archbiſhop *Laud*, will eaſily diſcern, that their apprehenſions were not groundleſs.

Whether the connexion between free agency and merit is real throughout, or where it begins to be broken, I pretend not to decide, or even to examine; being determined, on the preſent occaſion at leaſt, to offend or diſturb no man, with my private opinions. One thing, however, I beg leave juſt to mention, in favour of the *Calviniſts*; namely, that ſome very eminent men of the preſent generation have gone a great way in their *philoſophical diſquiſitions*, towards vindicating the predeſtinarian theology of theſe our forefathers [*U*]. And, when it is conſidered that ſo able a writer as Dr. *Clayton*, the late Biſhop of *Clogher*, could find no other way of eſtabliſhing the free-will or free-agency of man, but by putting ſuch limitations, as he has done, upon the preſcience of God, no reaſonable man would haſtily conclude, that the Calviniſts have nothing material to ſay for themſelves [*W*].

[*U*] See Dr. *Hartley's* Obſervations on Man, *paſſim*. The Preface to Dr. *Law's* Tranſlation of *King's* Origin of Evil. *Thourniſeyer's* Letters in the *French* Magazine, 1750, 1751.

[*W*] Thoughts on *Self-Love*, *Innate Ideas*, &c. Lond. 1753. The Apoſtle *Paul* hath ſaid, *There muſt be hereſies*. 1 *Cor.* xi. 9. not *ex neceſſitate rei ab intus*, but from the perverſe nature of

But,

But, to leave the theoretical part of this problem for the preſent: Thoſe old worthies who predicted the return of Popery, in conſequence of the introduction of *Arminianiſm*, were not ſo widely miſtaken, as to the event, as may be imagined. They had good reaſons to expect it, from the whole conduct of *Laud* and his fellows. And, though theſe were ſeaſonably ſtop'd in their career, their principles have been eſpouſed and purſued by their ſucceſſors, in ſuch ſort, as to give more than a ſuſpicion to ſome competent obſervers, that the church of *England* has been, and ſtill is, though by degrees imperceptible to vulgar eyes, *edging* back once more towards Popery.

"From the beginning of *Charles* I." ſays a ſenſible writer, "the pulpit took up a new ſcheme, "under the particular influence of Archbiſhop "*Laud*. A ſcheme ſo entirely new, that it was "remonſtrated againſt by the Parliament, as con-"trary to the Articles, and as what had a ten-"dency to carry back the nation into Popery. "*Perhaps, in ſome meaſure, the apprehenſion of that* "*Parliament has been verified.* And from *Charles* I. "the new ſyſtem hath chiefly prevailed, down to "the preſent period [*X*]." And, he might have

man, ſay his interpreters. Perhaps, if men had been candid, capable, and upright throughout, all their controverſies, from *Paul's* time to this hour, might have been avoided, ſave *one*, that concerning *Predeſtination*, which muſt probably have ariſen at all events.

[*X*] *Seagrave's* True Proteſtant, p. 25.

added,

added, "has been attended with ſuitable ef-"fects."

If any one is deſirous to ſee theſe *apprehenſions verified* in particular inſtances, he may ſatisfy himſelf by conſulting a pamphlet written by Dr. *Du Moulin*, ſome time Hiſtory-Profeſſor in *Oxford*, printed in 1680 [*Y*], which might be continued even to the preſent times, by the addition of examples, ſtill more ſtriking than thoſe of *Du Moulin*. The effect of which cannot be more convincingly proved, than by the great and alarming increaſe of Popery in theſe kingdoms [*Z*].

The clergy of the church of *England*, it is true, have conſtantly diſclaimed all connexion with Popery, or any deſign or diſpoſition to promote that cauſe; which however is but an equivocal proof of a different ſpirit, and none at all, that the tendency of their doctrines doth not bend towards Popery.

When *Janſenius* publiſhed his ſyſtem of *Grace*, the good Catholics taxed him with *Calviniſm*. In vain did he endeavour to wipe off the aſperſion.

[*Y*] Intituled, *A ſhort and true Account of the ſeveral Advances the Church of* England *hath made towards Rome.*

[*Z*] See Dr. *Stebbing's* two little Tracts againſt Popery, juſt publiſhed. Whoever will be at the pains to conſult this Doctor's *Polemical Tracts*, and compare ſome paſſages in them (particularly in his *Rational Inquiry*, &c.) with ſome things in theſe little books, will ſee how he is obliged to lower his high-church notions, to battle the papiſts; conſcious, as it ſhould ſeem, that his *old* principles had too much of a popiſh complexion.

In

In vain did he write moſt bitterly againſt the Proteſtants, in order to convince his incredulous brethren that he was not to be ranked among them. They returned again and again to the charge, and confirmed it, by ſhewing both the origin and tendency of his doctrines [*A*].

The Papiſts have common ſenſe, and can ſee, no doubt, into the *tendency* of certain opinions, as well as *Luther* or *Calvin* did. And, whatever *Janſenius* could ſay for himſelf, the orthodox Catholics ſaw, that, in the next generation, his followers, if they adhered to his opinions, would, very probably, leave their church: to prevent which, they procured the condemnation of his book, *anno* 1653.

The ſame ſuſpicions procured the famous Bull *Unigenitus*, condemning the doctrines of Father

[*A*] *Quin in Galliis, quod beneficii loco ſine dubio numeravit, magnam adeptus erat librorum Calviniavorum copiam, quorum de fontibus hauſit* Auguſtini *interpretationem, et invenerat homines a* Calvini *diſciplinâ non alienos, quibus liberiores de* Gratia *ſermones contulerat.* Bayle's Dict. JANSENIUS, remark [*F*], cited from a book, intituled *Janſenius Suſpectus*, aſcribed to the Jeſuit *Vavaſſor*. The Janſeniſts, as may well be ſuppoſed, endeavoured, by all poſſible means, to rid themſelves of this imputation. Mr. *Bayle* reports their ſucceſs in the following words. "The *Janſeniſts* have maintained, with equal heat, that, upon "the point of *Liberty*, they were not *Calviniſts*. There are "no artifices, or ill grounded diſtinctions, but what have been "made uſe of to colour that pretence; and all this to avoid "the dangerous conſequences they foreſaw would follow their "confeſſing any conformity with the *Calviniſts*." *Ibid.* Rem. [*H*].

Paſquier

Paſquier Queſnel, in the year 1713. Was this man ſo treated, becauſe his conduct gave any offence as a Papiſt? No; he died not only a ſincere, but a bigotted ſon of that church: and, what is more, he ſo died in a Proteſtant country, where he was under no neceſſity to diſſemble; namely, at *Amſterdam*, December 2, 1719.——"He received extreme unction, extended on a "matt; he took the holy *viaticum* on his knees; "— he made his profeſſion of faith in the pre-"ſence of two apoſtolical protonotaries, — im-"porting, that he believed all the truths, which "*Jeſus Chriſt* taught his church; that he "will die within the boſom of it, and con-"demns all errors which it condemns, or ſhall "condemn. He acknowledges the Pope the "firſt Vicar of Jeſus Chriſt, and the apoſtolical "ſee, the centre of union.—But withal, ſtill be-"lieves he had taught nothing in the obnoxious "book, which is not conformable to the faith "of the church."—— And had his ſuperiors thought ſo too, they had all the reaſon in the world to be ſatisfied with his edifying ca-thoſicism.

But go to the propoſitions, extracted from his book for condemnation, and you will preſently ſee, that he was not only of *Calvin's* mind in the articles of *grace*, *juſtification*, &c. but had built upon thoſe principles, ſome other doctrines, which

are in little agreement with the faith he profeſſes to repoſe in the church [B].

I forbear to mention the more recent diſturbances that have been in *France*, about the ſame doctrines; concerning which it has been imagined, that if the church and ſtate could not find the means by their united powers, totally to ſuppreſs the Janſeniſts; Janſeniſm would infallibly produce a Reformation of Religion, upon the true Proteſtant plan.

The reſult is, that our firſt reformers framed, and placed the xxxix Articles, and more particularly thoſe called *Calviniſtical*, as the ſureſt and ſtrongeſt barriers to keep out popery. A Proteſtant Divine may poſſibly have his objections againſt the plain ſenſe of thoſe Articles; but, in this caſe, he ought not to ſubſcribe them at all. For if he can bring himſelf to aſſent to, and ſubſcribe them in a *catholic* ſenſe, I would deſire to know what ſecurity the church has, that he does not put the like *catholic* ſenſe (with which he may be furniſhed by the Jeſuits) upon thoſe Articles which concern Tranſubſtantiation and Purgatory?

In anſwer to this, we are told, that theſe doctrinal Articles concerning Grace, Freewill, Predeſtination, &c. are ſuſceptible of an *Arminian* ſenſe, and this is the

[B] Theſe propoſitions may be ſeen in *The preſent State of the Republic of Letters*, for *July*, 1733. From whence alſo the account above of *Queſnel's* death is taken.

Third Inducement our modern ſubſcribers have to plead.

Archbiſhop *Laud*, as we have ſeen, was the earlieſt patron of this device. However, I cannot think the practice would have thriven as it has done, if he had been its only patron. His name is in no great veneration with the rational part of the Engliſh Clergy, particularly with thoſe who are the moſt ſtrenuous advocates for a latitude in ſubſcribing. And, by an unaccountable reverſe of things, the men who are enamoured the moſt of *Laud's* political and hierarchical principles, have contended with the utmoſt zeal, againſt putting a double ſenſe upon any of the Articles.

It ſeems to me indeed, that theſe two parties have not perfectly underſtood each other concerning this *double ſenſe*, of which one affirms, and the other denies, the Articles to be capable. Let us conſider this matter, with reſpect ſtill to the doctrinal Articles called calviniſtical.

When the controverſy between the *Calviniſts* and *Arminians* firſt appeared in form, the latter were told in plain terms, "that whoſoever op-"poſed the abſolute decree of *Predeſtination*, "croſſed the doctrine of the church of *England*; "and that the Engliſh univerſities, and Biſhops, "had always condemned the contradictory to "abſolute decrees [C]."

[C] Biſhop *Davenant*, Animadverſions on a treatiſe, intituled, *God's Love to Mankind*, pag. 6.

This has been often denied, and as often re-aſſerted. Dr. *Waterland*, in his Supplement, labours ſtrenuouſly, with old *Heylin's* tools, to prove that our Articles in particular are *Anticalviniſtical*.

But the author of the *Reply to the Supplement*, who is ſaid to be Dr. *Sykes*, hath ſo effectually confuted him, that it is not likely *that* pretence will ever be revived any more.

After Dr. *Sykes* hath proved his point againſt the *ſupplement*, he ſubjoins the following ingenuous acknowledgment.

"But without entering into any farther hiſto-
"rical diſquiſitions, I think it evident that the
"Articles were made by men who were *thorough-*
"*ly* in St. *Auſtin's* Scheme, and that they meant
"to expreſs *that*. They choſe to expreſs them-
"ſelves with great moderation and temper; in
"conſequence of which, men of different opini-
"ons *have thought themſelves at liberty* to take a
"latitude, in order to come in. Accordingly
"men of very different opinions, can, and do ſub-
"ſcribe; and ſince the words are capable of ſuch
"meaning, an *Arminian* honeſtly ſubſcribes to
"the general words; whereas were the *ſenſe* of
"the compiler, and not his *words*, only the ſtan-
"dard, none but a *Calviniſt* could honeſtly ſub-
"ſcribe [*D*]."

I think it very evident that Dr. *Waterland* and his Antagoniſt meant, by *a latitude in ſubſcribing*, two very different things. Dr. *Waterland* could

[*D*] *Reply*, pag. 39.

never

never mean to exclude a *Calviniſt* from ſubſcribing the ſeventeenth Article: ſince the utmoſt he ventures to ſay of it, is, "I am rather of opinion, "that the Article leans to the *Anticalvinian* per-"ſuaſion." Dr. *Waterland* therefore was of opinion, that the compilers left room both for the *Calviniſt*, and the *Arminian* to ſubſcribe. And that both the *Calviniſt*, and *Arminian*, may honeſtly ſubſcribe, that is, conſiſtently with the *ſenſe*, or rather the *intention* of the compiler.

On the contrary, Dr. *Sykes* is of opinion, that with reſpect to the *ſenſe* or *intention* of the compilers, the *Arminian* ſenſe is quite excluded, and accordingly derives the allowance of a Latitude to the *Arminian*, from the ſenſe the *general words* will receive. And this, as I take it, is the *latitude*, or the *literal* and *grammatical* ſenſe for which Biſhop *Burnet*, Dr. *Clarke*, and perhaps the Doctors *Nicholls* and *Bennet*, contend.

I apprehend that, if Dr. *W.'s* hypotheſis could be ſupported by proper evidence, every one will allow, that he exhibits much the *honeſter* ſcheme of *Latitude*, of the two. But that is impoſſible; and Dr. *Sykes's* premiſſes, that the *Calviniſtical* ſenſe of the Articles, excluſive of the *Arminian* ſenſe, was the ſenſe of the compilers, ſtand indiſputable.

But how could honeſt men ever bring themſelves to think, they were at liberty to put a ſenſe upon a writing, which the authors of that writing never intended? The writing in queſtion, is a public writing, and no public authority is preten-

ded for taking this liberty, but *His Majeſty's Declaration*, which, whatever weight it might have had in its day, has evidently been of no force, for above an hundred years paſt.

What makes it more ſurprizing, that any the leaſt ſtreſs ſhould be laid upon this Declaration, is, that Dr. *Sykes* allows, that "ſuppoſing the legiſlature itſelf, conſidered as ſuch, were (without a new declaratory law) to intermeddle in "determining what is the proper ſenſe and extent of the Articles, and what ſhall be judged "agreeable, or diſagreeable to them, —— this "would be determining what they had no right "to determine [*E*]."

Is this Declaration then, a new declaratory Law? No body, I ſuppoſe, will pretend that. So far therefore, as it intermeddles in determining what is the proper ſenſe and extent of the Articles, and what ſhall be judged agreeable or diſagreeable to them, it pretends to determine what it hath no right to determine. It would have been very ſtrange doctrine in the ears of Dr. *Sykes* himſelf, to ſay, that King *Charles*, in the ſingle capacity of a monarch, had a right to do that, which the legiſlature in its collective capacity had *no* right to do.

When Dr. *Sykes* firſt undertook to oppoſe Dr. *Waterland* in this matter, it is probable he did not foreſee, that he ſhould be obliged to own,

[*E*] *Reply*, pag. 15.

that

that the Articles in queſtion were *evidently Calviniſtical*. His arguments, in his firſt pamphlet, go upon the ſuppoſition, that the ſenſe of the Articles is not fixed; which is only ſaying in other words, that the meaning of the compilers is not known. And to keep matters under ſuch uncertainty, for purpoſes now very well underſtood, ſeems to have been the view of the King's Declaration.

But the Doctor, by acknowleging the ſenſe of certain articles to be originally *calviniſtical*, has, with reſpect to *thoſe* articles, deprived himſelf of the privilege he might otherwiſe pretend to derive from the Declaration; namely, of ſubſcribing them in an *Arminian* ſenſe. The Declaration ſuppoſes the Articles to be drawn up in general words, which favour *no ſide*. Allow that the Articles were originally drawn up to favour *one* ſide, and what uſe can you make of the Declaration? Or what refuge for *various* ſenſes, can you find under *that*?

For my own part, I cannot but think that an honeſt man, muſt have ſome ſtruggles with himſelf, before he can bring himſelf to give a ſenſe to words, which *he knows* they were never meant to bear; and eſpecially when thoſe words, are the words of a covenant, importing ſome kind of ſecurity given to the public, by aſſenting to them.

And yet, certain it is, that ſome very good and worthy men, by virtue of a certain ſort of caſuiſtry, have reconciled themſelves to this prac-

tice, to avoid ſome preſent inconveniencies grievous to fleſh and blood. And having met with a remarkable inſtance of this in the courſe of my inquiries into this ſubject, I ſhall now lay it before the reader, the rather as, from a certain reſemblance in the features, I am perſuaded, that our modern Caſuiſtry is, in a great meaſure, derived from this great exemplar.

It has been already obſerved, that ſome of the ancient Puritans in King *James's* time, refuſed to ſubſcribe the Articles, upon the ſuppoſition that the *purpoſe*, if not the *doctrine* of the church, was changed from what it had been. When *Arminianiſm* came to be more openly avowed by the Biſhops, and ſupported by King *Charles's* Injunctions, &c. the ſame people were in ſtill greater diſtreſs, not knowing what uſe might be made of their ſubſcriptions, as they were taken in the canonical form, which admitted of no reſerve or limitation whatever; and it does not appear, that the ſubtelties of our modern caſuiſtry had *then* been found out.

But theſe ſame Puritans, having, by oppoſing theſe attempts of their adverſaries with ſpirit and vigour, got the upper hand, it came to their turn to impoſe terms and conditions upon thoſe, who had formerly put the like hardſhips upon them.

This occaſioned a great demand among the Royaliſts for caſuiſtical Divinity, and *ſalvoes* of ſeveral kinds; in which myſtical ſcience, the moſt eminent adept was Dr. *Robert Sanderſon*, afterwards

afterwards Biſhop of *Lincoln*. A venerable character, which has deſcended with much eſtimation, even to the preſent times; inſomuch that, I ſuppoſe, few people, who ſhould fall into any of thoſe dilemmas, from which he provided *ways to eſcape*, would ſcruple to abide by his judgment.

Among other caſes of different kinds, a queſtion was put to this able caſuiſt, whether a Royaliſt, who had taken the oath of allegiance to King *Charles* I. might conſcientiouſly take the *Engagement*, injoined by the Parliament in the year 1650, which ran in theſe words?

I A. B. do promiſe, that I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as it is now eſtabliſhed without King or Lords.

But before we take a view of this learned Doctor's ſentiments on this ſubject; it will be proper to look back a few years, to another tranſaction, wherein this ſame Dr. *Sanderſon* had a principal ſhare.

In the year 1646,47, the Parliament determined to viſit the univerſity of *Oxford*, by a committee of their own houſe. "But before the vi-
"ſitation could take place, the Vice-chancellor,
"Dr. *Fell*, ſummoned the Convocation [*June* 1.]
"wherein it was agreed, not to ſubmit to the
"Parliament viſitors. A paper of reaſons againſt
"the *Covenant*, the *Negative-oath*, and the *Direc-*
"*tory*, drawn up chiefly by Mr. *Sanderſon*, was
"alſo conſented to, and ordered to be publiſhed

"to

"to the world, both in Latin and English, viz. "under the title of *Reasons of the present judg-* "*ment of the university of* OXFORD, &c. [E]."

Under the head, *of the fatness for taking the covenant*, Dr. *Sanderson* expresses the sense of the university, and consequently his own, in the following terms.

(1) "It has been said, that *we take it* [the Co-"venant] *in our own sense.* But this we appre-"hend, contrary to the nature and end of an "oath; contrary to the end of speech; contrary "to the *design* of the covenant; and contrary "to the solem confession at the conclusion of it, "(*viz.*) that we shall take it with a true intention "to perform the same, as we shall answer it to "the Searcher of all hearts at the great day.

"Besides, this would be *jesuitical*; it would be "taking the name of God in vain; and it would "strengthen the objection of those who say, "there is no faith to be given to Protestants.

(2) "It has been said, we may take the cove-"nant with these salvos expressed, *So far as lato-*"*fully I may*: — *As it is agreeable to the word of* "*God, and the laws of the land*; — *Saving all oaths* "*by me formerly taken*, &c. which is no better "than vile hypocrisy; for by the same rule, one "may subscribe to the council of *Trent*, or the "Turkish *Alcoran*."

Thus judged the learned Dr. *Sanderson* in the year 1647. There are some other qualifying

[E] *Neal's* Hist. of the *Puritans*, octavo, vol. iii. p. 434.

particulars

particulars mentioned in this reſcript, which may be ſeen at full length in *Neale's* Hiſtory. Theſe are ſufficient for my preſent purpoſe; and very naturally ſuggeſt the following remarks.

Either the Parliament viſitors would have allowed of theſe *ſalvoes*, or they would not. If they would not, for what purpoſe are they brought in here? unleſs it be to condemn ſome of the royal party who had made uſe of them. And ſo far they are right, for this was no better than downright prevarication.

If the Parliament would have allowed of, or connived at, theſe *ſalvoes* (as I think the *Oxford*-men took it for granted) we ſee here was the *mens imponentis*, the *tacit* conſent, at leaſt, of the impoſers, on the ſide of thoſe who took it with theſe reſerves. And yet we find theſe caſuiſts were not for making uſe of this indulgence, becauſe contrary to the plain and expreſs words, as well as the deſign of the covenant. They accordingly condemn the practice as *jeſuitical*, full of vile hypocriſy, perverting the nature and end of an oath, abuſing the end of ſpeech, and highly ſcandalous to the Proteſtant name.

Let us now ſee how the ſame Dr. *Sanderſon* ſatisfied his queriſt, concerning taking the *Engagement*, in the year 1630, and how conſiſtent he was with his own judgment four years before.

He begins with laying it down as a fact, "that "all expreſſions by words, are ſubject to ſuch "ambiguities, that ſcarce any thing can be ſaid

"or

"or expreſſed in *any* words, how cautelouſly ſo-"ever choſen, which will not render the whole "ſubject capable of more conſtructions than "one [G]."

According to this maxim, the *Covenant*, which was ten times as long, at leaſt, as the *Engagement*, muſt be capable of ſtill more conſtructions. And yet Dr. *Sanderſon* could ſee plainly and clearly into the *Deſign* of *that*. — He lays it down,

2. "Where *one* conſtruction binds to *more*, an-"*other* to *leſs*, the true ſenſe is to be fixed by "the intention of the impoſer. For that all pro-"miſes and aſſurances, wherein faith is required "to be given to another, ought to be under-"ſtood *ad mentem imponentis*, according to the "mind and meaning of him to whom the faith "is given, ſo far forth as the meaning may rea-"ſonably appear."

Now ſurely no man's mind and meaning may *more* reaſonably, or *ſo* reaſonably, appear in any other way, as by his own perſonal poſitive explanation of it. The ſhort and true anſwer then to the queſtion had been, "If you are under

[G] *Nine Caſes of Conſcience*, p. 94. Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* hath ſaid much the ſame thing. "It is plainly impoſſible, that "any thing ſhould be delivered in ſuch clear and certain words, "as to be abſolutely incapable of any other ſenſe." — But then he adds, — "And yet notwithſtanding this, the meaning of "them may be ſo plain, that any *unprejudiced* and *reaſonable* "man may certainly underſtand them." *Preface* to his ſermons, octavo, 1713, p. xv. Which ſeems to have been ſufficiently the caſe with the *Engagement*, to have excuſed Dr. *Sanderſon* the pains he hath taken with it.

"any uncertainty, concerning the meaning of "any expreſſions in the *Engagement*, conſult the "Impoſers, and govern yourſelf by their interpre-"tation." Caſes might have happened, where the intention of the impoſer was doubtful, and where the Impoſer himſelf could not be come at. In the preſent inſtance the Impoſers were living, eaſily found, and capable of explaining their own meaning with the greateſt preciſion.

But probably *theſe* Impoſers would not have anſwered the *Queriſt's* end ſo well as Dr. *Sanderſon*, who goes on,

3. ——— *Reaſonably appear*, I mean, by the "nature of the matter about which it is converſ-"ant, and ſuch ſignification of the words where-"in it is expreſſed, as, according to the ordinary "uſe of ſpeech among men, agreeth beſt there-"to."

But if the mind and meaning of the impoſer *reaſonably* appears by the nature of the ſubject, and by the ordinary ſignification of the words wherein it is expreſſed, then it *ſufficiently* appears. There is no pretence left, in ſuch a caſe, for doubt or ambiguity. The queſtion does not concern ſuch a caſe; but thoſe caſes only, wherein the mind of the Impoſer does *not* ſufficiently appear. And here, conſcience and good faith require, that you ſhould conſult the Impoſer himſelf, if he may be found.— "You are miſtaken, "ſays the Caſuiſt, for,

4. "If

"If the intention of the impoſer be not ſo "fully declared by the words and the nature of "the buſineſs, but that the ſame words may, in "fair conſtruction, be ſtill capable of a double "meaning, ſo as, taken in one ſenſe, they ſhall "bind to *more*, and in another to *leſs*, I conceive "it is not neceſſary, nor always expedient (but "rather, for the moſt part, otherwiſe) for the "promiſer, before he give [his] faith, to demand "of the impoſer, whether of the two is his mean-"ing? But he may, *by the rule of prudence*, and "that (for ought I ſee) without the violation of "any law of his conſcience, make his *juſt* advan-"tage of that ambiguity, and take it in the ſame "ſenſe which ſhall bind him to the *leſs*."

This looks extremely like a contradiction to what went before, namely that "all promiſes, "&c. *ought* to be underſtood *ad mentem imponen-"tis*." But dextrous caſuiſts can extricate themſelves out of much more conſiderable difficulties. Obſerve how nimbly the Doctor comes off here.

"Since the faith to be given, is intended to "the behoof of him to whom it is given, it con-"cerneth him to take care, that his meaning be "expreſſed in ſuch words, as will ſufficiently "manifeſt the ſame to the underſtanding of a "reaſonable man. Which if he neglect to do, "no law of equity or prudence bindeth the pro-"miſer, by an overſcrupulous diligence, to make "it out, whereby to lay a greater obligation "upon himſelf, than he need to do."

But

But here the Doctor is met full in the face by another of his principles, which is, that "scarce "any thing can be expressed in any words *how* "*cautelously soever chosen*, which will not admit "of more constructions than one."—So that after the utmost *care* and *caution* the imposer could possibly take, his meaning might be dubious to a reasonable man, and much more to a *prejudiced* Querist, and a *willing* Casuist, as will more particularly appear now, that we attend the learned Doctor, in the application of his principles to the *Engagement*.

"In which, our Casuist says, there are sundry "ambiguities.

1. "The words *true* and *faithful*, may intend, "either *fidelity* and *allegiance* to be performed to "the powers in possession, as their right and "due; or such a kind of *fidelity* as captives taken "in war promise to their enemies, &c.

2. "By the word *Commonwealth*, may either "be meant—the *prevalent party*—now possessed "of, and exercising, supreme power in this King-"dom: Or else the *whole entire Body of the Eng-"lish nation*, as it is a civil society, or state with-"in itself, distinguished from all other foreign "states.

3. "The word *established*, may signify the "*establishment* of the present form of Govern-"ment, either *de jure*, or de *facto*, &c."

Out of these distinctions he works the two following senses of the engagement.

"I

"If the intention of the impoſer be not ſo "fully declared by the words and the nature of "the buſineſs, but that the ſame words may, in "fair conſtruction, be ſtill capable of a double "meaning, ſo as, taken in one ſenſe, they ſhall "bind to *more*, and in another to *leſs*, I conceive "it is not neceſſary, nor always expedient (but "rather, for the moſt part, otherwiſe) for the "promiſer, before he give [his] faith, to demand "of the impoſer, whether of the two is his mean-"ing? But he may, *by the rule of prudence*, and "that (for ought I ſee) without the violation of "any law of his conſcience, make his *juſt* advan-"tage of that ambiguity, and take it in the ſame "ſenſe which ſhall bind him to the *leſs*."

This looks extremely like a contradiction to what went before, namely that "all promiſes, "&c. *ought* to be underſtood *ad mentem imponen-"tis*." But dextrous caſuiſts can extricate themſelves out of much more conſiderable difficulties. Obſerve how nimbly the Doctor comes off here.

"Since the faith to be given, is intended to "the behoof of him to whom it is given, it con-"cerneth him to take care, that his meaning be "expreſſed in ſuch words, as will ſufficiently "manifeſt the ſame to the underſtanding of a "reaſonable man. Which if he neglect to do, "no law of equity or prudence bindeth the pro-"miſer, by an overſcrupulous diligence, to make "it out, whereby to lay a greater obligation "upon himſelf, than he need to do."

But

But here the Doctor is met full in the face by another of his principles, which is that "scarce "any thing can be expressed in any words *how* "*cautelously soever chosen*, which will not admit "of more constructions than one."—So that after the utmost *care* and *caution* the imposer could possibly take, his meaning might be dubious to a reasonable man, and much more to a *prejudiced* Querist, and a *willing* Casuist, as will more particularly appear now that we attend the learned Doctor, in the application of his principles to the *Engagement*.

"In which, our Casuist says, there are sundry "ambiguities.

1. "The words *true* and *faithful*, may intend, "either *fidelity* and *allegiance* to be performed to "the powers in possession, as their right and "due; or such a kind of *fidelity* as captives taken "in war promise to their enemies, &c.

2. "By the word *Commonwealth*, may either "be meant—the *prevalent party*—now possessed "of, and exercising, supreme power in this King-"dom: Or else the *whole entire Body of the Eng-"lish nation*, as it is a civil society, or state with-"in itself, distinguished from all other foreign "states.

3. "The word *established*, may signify the "*establishment* of the present form of Govern-"ment, either *de jure*, or de *facto*, &c."

Out of these distinctions he works the two following senses of the engagement.

"I

"I acknowledge the ſovereign power in this "nation, whereunto I owe allegiance and ſub- "jection, to be rightly ſtated in the houſe of "Commons, wherein neither King nor Lords "(as ſuch) have, or henceforth ought to have "any ſhare. And I promiſe, that I will per- "form all allegiance and ſubjection thereunto, "and maintain the ſame with my fortunes and "my life, to the utmoſt of my power."

They who know the hiſtory of thoſe times, and the occaſion of the *Engagement*, can entertain no doubt but this was the natural meaning of this ſecurity, and will therein ſee a manifeſt reaſon why Dr. *Sanderſon* would not ſend his Queriſt to the Impoſers for a reſolution of his doubts: eſpecially as, by his quibbles, he could, for his ſatisfaction, ſqueeze the following ſenſe out of the ſame words of the Engagement.

"Whereas, *for the preſent*, the ſupreme power "in England is *actually poſſeſſed* and *exerciſed* by "the Houſe of Commons, without either King "or Lords; I promiſe that, *ſo long as I live under* "*that power and protection*, I will not contrive or "attempt any act of hoſtility againſt them; but, "living quietly and peaceably under them, will "endeavour myſelf, *faithfully, in my place and* "*calling*, to do, *what every good member of a com-* "*monwealth ought to do, for the ſafety of my coun-* "*try, and preſervation of civil ſociety therein.*"

After

After which follow ſome arguments tending to prove, that this latter was *more probably* the ſenſe of the Impoſers, than the other; which can be looked upon in no better light than of an attempt to inſult the common ſenſe of all mankind.

In the beginning of this caſe of conſcience, the learned Doctor offers ſomething, by way of ſhewing, that the *Solemn League and Covenant*, being expreſsly contrary to the oaths of allegiance, was not lawfully to be taken by any man who had taken ſuch oaths, or was perſuaded ſuch allegiance was due. Which he ſeems to have mentioned, leſt his *Oxford*-divinity upon the *Covenant* ſhould be applied to the caſe of the *Engagement*. The difference between the two caſes, however, conſiſts ſingly and ſolely in theſe *probabilities* he mentions, that the framers of the *Engagement* intended this *lower ſenſe*, which no doubt he thought to be conſiſtent with the Queriſts allegiance to K. *Charles*. And indeed not without reaſon, ſince, without all diſpute, both the *Caſuiſts* and the *Queriſts* principles led them to believe, that *every good member of the commonwealth ought, in his place and calling*, to contribute all in his power to the reſtoration of K. *Charles*, and that *for the ſafety of his country, and the preſervation of civil ſociety therein*. No one can doubt of this, who knows that it was this ſame Dr. *Sanderſon* who declared, it was not lawful to reſiſt the Prince upon the throne, even to ſave all the ſouls in the whole world.

But did Dr. *Sanderſon* really think that the powers then in being were ſuch fools and triflers, as *probably* to *intend* to put no other but his *lower ſenſe* upon the Engagement, or indeed to allow of *that* ſenſe at all? — It is too evident for his credit, from his own words in this very tract, that he did not. For he intreats his correſpondent to take care, that no copies of his paper ſhould get abroad, "Leſt the potent party," ſays he, "in conſideration of ſome things therein hinted, "might think the words of the *Engagement too* "*light*, and might thence take occaſion to lay "ſome heavier obligation upon the Royaliſts, in "words that would oblige to *more*."

Could the *Caſuiſt* have entertained any ſuſpicions of this ſort, had he really and ſincerely thought the *lower conſtruction* was the ſenſe intended by the potent party?

He concludes his caſe thus: "If any man, "out of theſe conſiderations, rather than ſuffer "extreme prejudice to his perſon, eſtate, or ne-"ceſſary relations, ſhall ſubſcribe the *Engagement*, "[in that ſenſe which binds to *leſs*] ſince his own heart condemneth him not," [and that it might not, he, good man, had taken no ordinary pains] "neither do I."

Who ſhall now be ſaucy enough to ſay, there is no faith to be given to Proteſtants?

"Many, without doubt," ſays Dr. *Waterland*, "have been guilty of prevaricating with ſtate "oaths;

"oaths; but nobody has yet been found ſan-
"guine enough to undertake the defence of it in
"print [*H*]."

This caſe of conſcience, however, was in print before *Waterland* was born; and, what is more, he *knew* it was. One may charitably hope, indeed, he did not ſuſpect it of defending prevarication, otherwiſe he would hardly have recommended theſe *Nine Caſes of Conſcience*, in his *Advice to young Students*. What notion had Dr. *W.* of defending prevarication? He has told us, in the period immediately preceding the laſt citation, "'Tis defending a fraudulent ſubſcription "upon principle, by rules of art." Subſtitute a *civil* in the place of an *eccleſiaſtical* ſubſcription, and you have a true character of *Sanderſon's* performance.

I cannot avoid remarking in this place the ſimilarity of the two caſes for which *His Majeſty's Declaration*, and this *Diſpenſation* of *Sanderſon's*, were reſpectively contrived.

James I. (or, if you will, *Charles* I.) *wanted* the aſſiſtance of the high-flying *Arminians*. But that he could not have, till, by ſubſcription, they had qualified themſelves for preferments in the church: and ſubſcribe they *decently* could not, till the Articles were ſome way *accommodated* to their notions. This was effected by the *Declaration*.

[*H*] Caſe of *Arian* Subſcription, p. 4.

Charles II. then in exile, wanted the aid of the Cavaliers and Preſbyterians, and this he could not have, till they had equipped themſelves for poſts of truſt and power; and to theſe they muſt paſs through the *Engagement*, which, in its obvious meaning, would not go down with numbers of them [*l*]. Dr. *Sanderſon* himſelf inſinuates, that this *temporizing* was neither unknown to, nor diſapproved by the King. And, to encourage it the more, tells the Queriſt, that "whenſoever "the preſent force was ſo removed from the ta-"ker [of the *Engagement*], or he from under it,

[*l*] The preſbyterians, if we may believe Dr. *Calamy*, were more ſcrupulous about taking the *Engagement*, than the Epiſcopalians. The famous Mr. *Richard Vines* was, for refuſing that ſecurity, put out of the Headſhip of *Pembroke* Hall in *Cambridge*, as was Dr. *Rainbow* at another college in the ſame univerſity. Dr. *Reynolds* forfeited the Deanry of Chriſt-Church, Oxford, on the ſame account, *Abridgment* 62, 63. Mr. *Baxter*, we are told, *ib.* p. 104. diſſuaded men from taking it, wrote againſt the taking it, and declared to thoſe who were for putting quibbling conſtructions on it, that, "the ſubject's allegi-"ance, or fidelity to his rulers, could not be acknowledged and "given in plainer words." Biſhop *Sanderſon* hints at theſe ſcruples of the preſbyterians, in this very tract, p. 94. concluding however, that, "for his own part, when we ſpeak of learn-"ing and conſcience, he holds moſt of the preſbyterians to be "very little conſiderable." What would not a man ſay to ſerve a cauſe, bad or good, that could ſay this? But let us not forget the excellent Dr. *Iſaac Barrow* on this occaſion, who, "when the *Engagement* was impoſed, ſubſcribed it; but upon "ſecond thoughts, repenting of what he had done, he applied "himſelf to the commiſſioners, declared his diſſatisfaction, and "prevailed to have his name razed out of the liſt." *Biogr. Brit.* in Article BARROW, *Text.* —— Moſt people will think *Barrow* as good a caſuiſt as *Sanderſon*.

"as

"as that he ſhould have power to act according "to his allegiance, the obligation would of itſelf "determine and expire." A ſort of doctrine that ſeems rather to have been born and bred at *Liege* or *St. Omer's*, than at *Oxford*.

One word with the Doctors *Sykes* and *Sanderſon* together, and I have done.

Dr. *Sykes* lays great ſtreſs upon this circumſtance, *viz.* that the church of *England*, being a Proteſtant church, cannot conſiſtently obtrude her own interpretations of ſcripture upon her members, ſo as to ſuperſede or over-rule the right of private judgment, or the liberty every one has to interpret for himſelf. "Whatever authority," ſays he, "the church may "*claim*, [he ſhould have added, or *exerciſe*] it "muſt ſtill be ſubſervient to the right of interpreting ſcripture for one's ſelf; or elſe the exhorting men to ſtudy the ſcriptures, is juſt ſuch "a banter and ridicule, as it would be ſeriouſly "to command one to ſee clearly and diſtinctly "any object, and at the ſame time to put falſe "ſpectacles before our eyes [*K*]."

Let us put this into political language. "We "muſt ſtill preſerve our *allegiance* to the *ſcriptures*, "notwithſtanding our ſubmitting to the *claims* "of the church *de facto*, which ſeem to be inconſiſtent with it. The church herſelf acknowledges the right of the ſcriptures *de jure*, and "therefore if ſhe challenges ſuch an *allegiance*

[*K*] Reply to *Waterland's* ſupplement, p. 26

"from us *de facto*, as contravenes our allegiance "to the ſcriptures" —— what then? —— The premiſſes certainly lead us to conclude — "We "muſt not comply with her, notwithſtanding her "*pretences* of acknowledging the ſovereign au- "thority of the ſcriptures." — Inſtead of that, Dr. *Sykes* only concludes — "She muſt then be "inconſiſtent with herſelf." — As if it was impoſſible for the church of *England* to be inconſiſtent with herſelf! The queſtion is, whether the church of *England* does not, by her authority *de facto*, ſuperſede the *allegiance* which ſhe profeſſes to be due to the ſcriptures *de jure*, by requiring ſubſcriptions to her own interpretations? And if ſhe does, what ought a conſcientious man to do in ſuch a caſe? — As little as I am in love with Biſhop *Sanderſon's* Theology, I will venture to leave *this* point to his deciſion, who in a caſe exactly parallel, determines as follows.

"The taking of the late *Solemn League and Co-* "*venant*, by any ſubject of *England* (notwithſtand- "ing the proteſtation in the preface, that there- "in *he had the honour of the King before his eyes*; "and that expreſs clauſe in one of the articles of "it, wherein he ſwore, *The preſervation of the* "*King's perſon and honour*) was an act as clear "contrary to *the oath of allegiance*, and the *natu-* "*ral duty* of every ſubject of *England*; as the "*aſſiſting of the King to the utmoſt of one's power*; "(which is a branch of the oaths) and *the aſſiſt-*

" *ing againſt any perſon whatſoever, with his utmoſt* " *power, thoſe who were actually in arms againſt the* " *King*, (which was the very end for which that " Covenant was ſet on foot) are contrary the one " to the other [*L*]."

The Doctor has expreſſed himſelf aukwardly enough; but his ſentiment is plain, and his inference unavoidable. " Therefore, no ſubject of " *England*, who deſired to preſerve his allegiance " to King Charles I. could conſcientiouſly take " the *Solemn League and Covenant*, notwithſtand- " ing the *ſaving clauſes* therein expreſſed." Let the reader make the application.

I am heartily ſorry that I cannot derive the practice of our ſubſcribing the xxxix Articles, with a *latitude*, from a more reſpectable origin than theſe foregoing precedents. Every man however, has the ſame right that I have of judging for himſelf. And I pretend to no more in this collection of facts, than to aſſiſt thoſe to whom the ſubject is of importance, to form their own ſentiments upon it, with preciſion and impartiality. There will ſtill be numbers among us, who will continue to ſubſcribe, and continue likewiſe to *care for none of theſe things*. Such as theſe perhaps, care not for matters of more conſequence; which indeed, I ſhould apprehend to be the caſe with the moſt of thoſe, who can bring themſelves to give a ſecurity of this kind

[*L*] *Nine Caſes*, p. 92, 93.

to the church, and to the publick, without a previous examination, to what the nature and circumstances of so solemn an act, do in reality amount.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Concerning the concluſions that ariſe from the foregoing diſquiſitions.

IT is now time to ſum up the account, and to conſider to what it amounts. A detail of facts, exhibiting all this contrariety of ſentiments, all this confuſion and uncertainty, with reſpect to the caſe of ſubſcribing our eſtabliſhed forms, would be of little uſe, if ſome conſequences might not be drawn from it, tending to lead us out of the labyrinth, and ſuggeſting ſome means of putting the matter upon a more edifying footing.

I have not, willingly and knowingly, miſrepreſented any thing, in ſtating the ſeveral caſes that have come under conſideration. I have cited authorities fairly and candidly, and have not, to my knowledge, ſuppreſſed any thing that might ſhew them to the beſt advantage. But if any one ſhould think there is a partial bias in the reflexions I have occaſionally made upon particular paſſages, I will readily give them up upon competent proof of ſuch obliquity, and abide by the concluſions, which any man of common honeſty and common ſenſe, ſhall think fit to draw from this perplexity and contradiction among ſo many learned

learned writers, who, on other occaſions, acquit themſelves with ſufficient clearneſs and conſiſtency.

Such a one, I preſume, will make no difficulty to acknowledge, that in this matter of ſubſcription at leaſt, a reformation is devoutly to be wiſhed. The Biſhops *Burnet* and *Clayton*, the Doctors *Clarke*, *Sykes*, and others, confeſs it, and call for it. And tho' ſuch writers as Biſhop *Conybeare*, and the Doctors *Nicholls*, *Bennet*, *Waterland*, *Stebbing*, &c. the heroes of our fifth chapter, neither allow the expedience of ſuch reformation, nor would have endured any propoſals of that kind without a ſtrenuous oppoſition, yet their own writings on the ſubject, when compared together, are more than a thouſand advocates for it; if it were only for the ſake of taking away the offence and ſcandal, ariſing from the ſuppoſed occaſion the Church of *England* has to employ ſuch a ſett of party-coloured Caſuiſts.

Indeed an unlimited latitude of interpretation, allowing every ſubſcriber of the Articles, to abound in his own ſenſe, tends in a great meaſure, to ſuperſede the neceſſity for a reviſion of our preſent ſyſtem, as ſuppoſing that men of different opinions may very well acquieſce in it as it is. This is what Biſhop *Burnet*, Dr. *Clarke*, and the writers of that complexion contend for, and in ſo doing, furniſh their adverſaries with an anſwer out of their own mouths, whenever they plead for

a reformation; a term which ſuppoſes and implies that things are in ſuch a ſtate, as honeſt and conſcientious ſubſcribers *cannot* acquieſce in.

Of late indeed, the neceſſity for a reformation in *this*, as well as in other articles of our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, has been acknowledged by unprejudiced and conſcientious men of different perſuaſions. And even they who dread it on private and perſonal conſiderations, when they think fit to appear in oppoſition to any propoſals tending that way, betray the moſt manifeſt tokens of conviction, that a reformation would be a right meaſure in itſelf; and therefore ſet themſelves to ſhew, that a reformation is rather *impracticable*, than *unneceſſary*; of which I ſhall preſently give ſome remarkable inſtances.

Let us then procede to conſider the force of the arguments againſt a reformation, drawn from the *impracticability* of it; taking along with us the conceſſion, that a reformation is expedient and deſirable.

The queſtion with which this inquiry naturally opens, is, by whom ſhould a reformation in our eccleſiaſtical affairs be firſt attempted?

And here I take it for granted, that all ſides will be unanimous in their anſwer: namely by the Biſhops, and other pious and learned divines, who by the courſe of their education and ſtudies, and their intercourſe with clergymen of all capacities and diſpoſitions, may well be ſuppoſed to have

have the cleareſt conception both of what is amiſs, and of the moſt effectual methods to bring things into order.

Here the only difficulty to be apprehended is, that the Biſhops having no authority to undertake any thing of this ſort of themſelves, recourſe muſt be had to the higher powers, firſt for leave or licenſe to make a proper examination into the particulars that may want to be reformed, and afterwards to give a legal ſanction to ſuch alterations as may be found neceſſary. And there may perhaps be ſome doubt made, whether my Lords the Biſhops would ſuccede in applying to the Crown for the powers neceſſary for ſuch an undertaking, or to the Legiſlature for their authoriſing ſuch a reform, as their Lordſhips and their aſſiſtants might think requiſite.

Now for any ſuch objection as this I apprehend there is not the leaſt room, till ſuch application has actually been made and rejected. Have our Biſhops and great churchmen ever made the trial? Have they been diſapointed in the event of it?

I will venture to anſwer both theſe queſtions in the negative: and will ſupport my opinion by a witneſs worthy of all credit.

"I have been credibly informed, ſays this de-"ponent, his Majeſty * has ſometimes ſaid to a "late great prelate, when paying his duty at "court, — *Is there any thing my Lord, you would*

* King GEORGE II.

"*have*

" *have me do for the church of* England? *If there* " *is, let me know it.* And he, continues this " writer, who of his own motion will ſay this, " cannot receive otherwiſe than graciouſly, any " petition for leave and opportunity to his clergy, " to conſult together for its good [Qu. *whoſe* " *good, or the good of what, the church, or the* " clergy?] if it be made with decency and pro-priety [*A*]."

Upon this fact I reſt the evidence, that no application has been made to the throne, on the behalf of reforming the church of *England*, and that, if our Biſhops had applied, their petition would not have been rejected.

The patrons of the preſent eccleſiaſtical ſyſtem therefore, put the *impracticability* of a reformation upon the people, with whom they can uſe more freedom. They tell us, the *times* are not ripe for reformation. The Engliſh of which is, that the temper and manners of our people are not in a condition to be reformed.

Hear how the ſame *free* and *impartial conſiderer* I have juſt now quoted, ſets forth the *unripeneſs* of the preſent times in this reſpect.

" The groſs body of the people are weak, ig-" norant, injudicious, capricious, factious, head-" ſtrong, ſelf-willed, and ſelf-ſufficient, and never " leſs diſpoſed than at this time to acquieſce in

[*A*] Free and impartial conſiderations on the *free and candid Diſquiſitions*, &c. p. 56. printed for *Baldwin* 1751. The author of which is now known to be the rev. JOHN WHITE, B. D.

" the

"the wiſdom, and ſubmit themſelves to the de-
"ciſions of their ſuperiors, nor ever more impa-
"tient to be driven from their old habits, and
"put out of their way in the offices or any other
"matters of religion; eſpecially thoſe which they
"themſelves are to practiſe, and have a perſonal
"concern in. *This is now grown to be the general*
"*temper of the people.* I dont call it their bigotry.
"No, 'tis a ſpirit of mutiny and independence.
"And this I think you muſt allow, is ſtill in-
"creaſing, as much as you or I can pretend the
"other is decreaſing among us [*B*]."

I would not have cited this paſſage in proof of what I have advanced, but that the author of it gives broad hints that he wrote *permiſſu ſuperiorum.* "Some things he omitted by the advice of "thoſe whoſe judgment he greatly *reverences*, and "cannot allow himſelf *in any thing* to differ from." Theſe muſt be his eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors, ſince in ſome or other of his books, he hath *allowed himſelf to differ* from men of almoſt all other denominations, who pretend to be judges of ſuch things. He ſpeaks as if he had conferred upon the ſubject of alterations "with a perſon in high "ſtation," p. 63. In another place he ſays, "nay I am ſatisfied WE ſhall not ſtand with "them [the diſſenters] for half a dozen things of "the like nature, [as the croſs in baptiſm] upon "ſo good and valuable a conſideration, as their "coming in and embracing the communion of "the church [*B*]." No man, one would think,

[*B*] [*B*] Ibidem. p. 7, 8.

at

at leaſt no ſuch man as Mr. *White*, would venture to anſwer for my Lords the biſhops, in ſo public a manner, and upon ſo nice a point, without ſome aſſurance that they would not diſown him, would the matter be brought to a trial. I conclude therefore, that this paragraph is agreeable to the ſentiments of thoſe great churchmen who ſuperviſed Mr. *White's* pamphlet; otherwiſe it certainly ſhould have been omitted, as ſome other things were, by the advice of his friend or friends in high ſtation. But let us now proceed to conſider the caſe it exhibits.

We have here the general temper of the groſs body of a chriſtian people deſcribed in terms, which with the addition of one or two epithets, would perfectly characterize the inhabitants of *Pandæmonium*. Bigotry, or a blind attachment to religious prejudices, would have afforded ſome excuſe for theſe wretches. Miſled by the ſuperſtition of ignorant parents, or impoſed upon by the wiles of crafty teachers, the fault might not have been wholly their own, that they were not more tractable and ſubmiſſive to proper authority. But this would have thrown part of their guilt where Mr. *White* did not want to have it thrown. They are therefore deprived of the benefit of this plea, and their depravity aſcribed to a factious headſtrong ſpirit of their own; an inborn malignity of heart, one would think, near akin to that of the *ſpirits who kept not their firſt eſtate*, and equally incurable.

And

And yet, when this *free* and *impartial* conſiderer comes to be croſs-examined upon this accuſation, we ſhall find ſuch evident tokens of diſingenuity, as diſcover that his teſtimony was not founded merely on the love of truth. For in the firſt place, who can theſe *ſuperiors* be, in whoſe wiſdom this mutinous people refuſe to acquieſce, and to whoſe judgment they will not ſubmit? Not their *eccleſiaſtical* ſuperiors we may be ſure; ſince Mr. *White* has told us in this ſame pamphlet, that this very people, capricious, factious, headſtrong, &c. as he has repreſented them, *have ſome reſpect for their* ſpiritual *guides and governors*; and *ſenſe* enough, with all their weakneſs, ignorance, and want of judgment, "to perceive that "thoſe who are led by their office, to think con-"tinually on thoſe things which concern religi-"on, are more likely to judge rightly of them, "than any *lay*-aſſembly whatever," p. 2.

The reſult is then that this ſpirit of mutiny, would only be exerted againſt the *lay*-ſuperiors of this headſtrong people. But how does this appear, or what foundation in the preſent caſe is there for any ſuch apprehenſion? When have our lay-ſuperiors attempted, within Mr. *White's* memory, "to drive us from our old habits, or "put us out of our way, in the offices, or any "other matters of religion, eſpecially thoſe which "we ourſelves are to practiſe, and have a perſon-"al concern in?" For my own part, I can re-

collect

collect but one inſtance, the late alteration of the ſtyle, which gave offence, as I have heard, to ſome elderly females, by diſplacing, as they thought, ſome of their darling feſtivals, particularly *Chriſtmas-day*. For the reſt, ſo far as this inſtance is in point, nothing can be more unlucky for Mr. *White* and the cauſe he is ſupporting. It is an incident that hath happened ſince his pamphlet was publiſhed. And the general acquieſcence of our people in this new law, ſhews ſufficiently, that they are not ſo very tenacious of their old habits againſt ſenſe and reaſon, as he would have it believed, and that he had raſhly and unreaſonably calumniated his countrymen.

The plain truth is, this gentleman was only dreſſing up a ſcarecrow, to deter a certain lay-aſſembly from taking matters of reformation out of the hands of the clergy, into their own, of which he every where betrays the moſt abject fears.

In the paroxyſm of ſuch panics, it is uſual for the party affected, to catch up the firſt weapon that falls in his way, and to deal his blows with ſo unſteady an hand, and ſo undiſcerning an eye, as oftentimes to maim or bruiſe a friend, inſtead of an enemy. So hath it happened to this valiant champion on the preſent occaſion.

He hath drawn ſo deteſtable a picture of the common people, that it may very well frighten any aſſembly of men in their wits, from meddling

with them in *any* province, civil or religious. But is it not natural to aſk, how came our countrymen into this degenerate ſtate? There have been times, when they were more reaſonable and condeſcending to the wiſdom of their ſuperiors. How come they, particularly, to be ſo weak, ignorant, and injudicious in *religious* matters? Does not this repreſentation carry with it ſome reflection on thoſe who ſhould have taught them better? And who ſhould theſe be, but the appointed teachers of religion? The Biſhops and paſtors of the church, who receive ſome millions annually as a conſideration for their watching for the ſouls of the people, and particularly for inſtilling into them chriſtian knowledge, and chriſtian principles?

Take the matter as Mr. *White* hath exhibited it, and you can perceive no trace of any due pains taken with them this way. If there is any appearance in his book that their eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors have taught them any thing, it is only that ſort of *ſenſe* which leads to *ſome reſpect* for themſelves, while they have ſuffered them to act and think with reſpect to their civil governors, whatever their unruly, headſtrong wills and affections may ſuggeſt to them: and will it not be ſaid, that the clergy may perhaps foment this ſpirit of faction and independence, towards their lay-ſuperiors, the better to ſecure the dependence of this headſtrong multitude upon themſelves?

In

In my opinion, Mr. *White's* friends *in high ſtations* could not have pitched upon a worſe advocate to plead their cauſe than himſelf. It might have been ſaid on the behalf of the clergy of the preſent generation at leaſt, that the people were corrupted before they came into their hands; — that theſe extreme degrees of degeneracy, cannot be ſuppoſed to have been contracted in the compaſs of a few years — that our preſent Biſhops and paſtors were obliged to take the people as they found them — but that they were uſing their utmoſt endeavours to correct their principles, and meliorate their habits, and had reaſon to hope for ſucceſs in due time.

But Mr. *White*, by alledging that this licentious ſpirit of the people is *ſtill increaſing*, leaves room to believe, that the preſent generation of religious paſtors, are juſt as negligent of their charge as their predeceſſors.

But to leave this gentleman a while to himſelf. I could never perſuade myſelf that the argument in defence of the chriſtian clergy, drawn from the nature of the times they lived in, however it may have been managed, is of any ſort of weight. An enterprizing genius of the preſent age, ſeems to have made the moſt of it, in a late attempt to reſtore the fathers ſo called, to ſome part of the credit they had loſt under the examination of *Daillè*, *Whitby*, *Barbeyrac*, *Middleton*, and others

[*D*]. And how has he ſucceeded? Has he ſhewn, in oppoſition to the charges brought againſt them by theſe writers, that they were judicious critics and interpreters of holy writ; accurate reaſoners; ſound moraliſts; conſiſtent and conſcientious caſuiſts; or even credible witneſſes to matters of fact? By no means. His defence of them is founded upon the conceſſion, that they were defective in all theſe articles, not thro' their own fault, but the error of the times. On this head this ingenious writer takes great pains to ſhew, by a long induction of particulars, how learning and ſcience were abuſed, corrupted, and diverted from the purpoſe, either of diſcovering or maintaining the truth, in the different ſchools and ſects of pagan orators, ſophiſts, and philoſophers. Among theſe it ſeems the fathers had their firſt rudiments, and the faſhion of the times keeping up the reputation of theſe depraved methods of reaſoning, &c. the fathers were obliged to deal with their pagan rivals in their own way, and to play their own ſophiſtry and prevarication upon them in their turn.

Is it poſſible this acute writer ſhould impoſe this ſtate of the caſe upon himſelf, or hope to impoſe it upon his readers, for a full juſtification of the fathers? For to what does all this learned harangue amount, but to this, that the fathers, inſtead of reforming, were themſelves corrupted by the men and the times they lived in?

[*D*] Warburton's *Julian*, Introduction.

If

If the times had not been faulty, there had been no occaſion for the fathers to mend them. And as they undertook this province, it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe they had means and expedients in their hands, adequate to the diſcharge of it. Theſe means and expedients, they themſelves confeſs, were the holy ſcriptures, from whence they might have been furniſhed with all neceſſary truths, as well as with the methods of inculcating them in *ſimplicity* and *godly ſincerity*, without having recourſe to *the inticing words of man's wiſdom*. Who gave them a commiſſion to model the truths of the Goſpel to the taſte of a licentious and corrupt world? or to ſubtilize the plain doctrines of Chriſt and his apoſtles, by the chemiſtry of the reigning philoſophy? I do not know indeed that the fathers pretended to any ſuch authority. But if they did, we, who have in our hands the only authentic commiſſion they had to teach, and the exemplification of it in the practice of the apoſtles, have no occaſion to believe them.

The memorable Mr. *Hales* of *Eton*, who ſaw as much *of the right uſe of the Fathers*, and as ſoon, as Mr. *Daillé* himſelf, and perhaps had full as much candor, with reſpect to the allowances that ought to be made on account of their ſituation in the world, was well aware of the apology that this learned Doctor has made for them; but however ſeems to have paid little regard to its merit.

Archbiſhop *Laud*, offended at the freedoms *Hales* had taken with church-authority and tradition, in his tract concerning *ſchiſm*, put the honeſt man to his purgation, which he underwent with a degree of courage, decency, and good ſenſe, that would have done him honour, had he left nothing behind him but that ſingle letter to *Laud*.

"I am thought," ſays this excellent perſon, to "have been too ſharp in cenſuring *antiquity* be-"yond the good reſpect which is due unto it. In "this point, my error, if any be, ſprang from "this, that taking *actions* to be the fruit by which "men are to be judged, I judged of the *perſons* "by their *actions*, and not of *actions* by the *per-*"*ſons* from whom they proceeded. For to judge "of *actions* by PERSONS and TIMES, I have al-"ways taken to be MOST UNNATURAL [*E*]."

[*E*] Mr. *Hales's* Letter to Archbiſhop *Laud*, uſually printed at the end of Biſhop *Hare's Difficulties* and *Diſcouragements*, &c. The Tract concerning *Schiſm* was written in the year 1636, and this apology very ſoon after. Which I mention on account of a paſſage in it that amounts almoſt to a demonſtration, that the firſt clauſe of our twentieth Article, concerning *Church-authority in controverſies of faith*, was not, *at that time*, held for authentic, and probably was not in any of the printed books of Articles *then* in uſe. The paſſage I mean is this: "I count "in point of *deciſion of church-queſtions*, if I ſay of the *authority* "*of the church*, that it was *none*; I know no adverſary I have, "the church of *Rome* only excepted. For this cannot be true, "except we make the church *judge of controverſies*; the *contrary* "to which we generally *maintain* againſt *that* church." Would *Hales* have ſaid this, and ſaid it too to ſuch a man as *Laud*, if

Whether

Whether the authority of Mr. *Hales*, with ſo ſenſible a conſideration to ſupport it, ſhould not be of ſuperior weight to Dr. *W*----'s, backed only with a large quantity of precarious ſpeculation upon very doubtful facts, muſt be left to their reſpective readers. For my own part, I am inclined to think, the ſafer apology for the Fathers would have been that obſervation which the ſame learned Doctor mentions elſewhere to have been made upon *Arnobius* and *Lactantius*, namely, that *they undertook the defence of Chriſtianity before they underſtood it.* This is a caſe which was perhaps common to all the Fathers, and admitted of a reaſonable excuſe; the ſame which the Apoſtle *Paul* allows in a ſimilar one, *they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.*

Whether the caſe of our modern Fathers would admit of a like apology, is not material to inquire; as it is certain, that an advocate who ſhould offer it on their behalf, would meet with no thanks at their hands. *They ſay, they ſee* as well as others, that things are out of order in the church; but alledge the unſeaſonableneſs of theſe times for any attempt to ſet them right. In the mean time, others ſee that the infection of the

he might have been confronted with an *authentic* book of Articles? 'Tis not unlikely that *Laud*, upon this occaſion, might reſolve to ſtop that gap for the future, and take care that the ſubſequent editions ſhould be *more correctly* printed. I have now at hand a Latin copy of the Articles, printed at *Oxford*, by *Lichfield*, 1736, without the firſt clauſe of the twentieth Article.

times has, in ſome degree, laid hold even of theſe venerable perſonages, and produced *appearances* of ſecularity, which, whenever a reformation ſhall be happily brought about, we may be ſure will not be ſuffered to diſparage their ſacred characters, nor to give offence any longer to thoſe weak and ſhort-ſighted brethren, who cannot comprehend that ſuch conformity to the world can contribute to bring the times to maturity for planting and bringing forth more evangelical fruits.

But let us do all ſides juſtice, and now proceed to examine how this plea of *impracticability* has been elucidated and enforced by certain writers, who were a little more prudent and cautious than the above-mentioned Mr. *White*.

"In all propoſals and ſchemes to be reduced "to practice," (ſays a very dextrous champion of the church of *England*) "we muſt ſuppoſe the "world to be WHAT IT IS, not WHAT IT OUGHT "TO BE. We muſt propoſe, not merely what "is abſolutely good in itſelf, but what is ſo with "reſpect to the prejudices, tempers, and conſti-"tutions we know, and are ſure to be among "us [*F*]."

To this doctrine a very eminent name is ſubſcribed, which is likewiſe ſubſcribed to ſome other doctrines utterly inconſiſtent with it, at leaſt in

[*F*] Biſhop *Hoadley's* Reaſonableneſs of Conformity, apud *Phil. Cantab.* p. 17.

my apprehenſion, unleſs conforming to *what the world is*, and conforming to the ſovereignty of Chriſt in his own kingdom, is preciſely one and the ſame thing [G].

Be this as it may, the doctrine of conforming to the prejudices, tempers, and conſtitutions, that we know to be among us, has clearly carried the vogue, and is now pretty generally adopted by the clergy, in whatever repute the reſt of the right reverend author's divinity may be with them.

"'Tis repreſented, that the world was never leſs diſpoſed to be ſerious and reaſonable, than at this period. Religious reflexion, we are informed, is not the *humour* of the times; nor can men of any ſort be brought to examine their own opinions and popular faſhions, with attention ſufficient to enable them to judge, either of the efficacy of ſuch remedies as might be propoſed by public authority, or the propriety or expediency of adminiſtring them."

"We are therefore adviſed, to exerciſe our prudence and our patience a little longer; to wait till our people are in a better temper, and, in the mean time, to bear with their manners and diſpoſitions; gently and gradually correcting their fooliſh and erroneous notions and habits; but ſtill taking care not to offend them with unreaſonable

[G] Sermon on the Nature of the Kingdom of Chriſt, and the Biſhop's Defences of it.

truths,

truths, nor to throw in more light upon them at once, than the weak optics of men, ſo long uſed to ſit in darkneſs, are able to bear.—In one word, to conſider the world as *it is*, and not as *it ought to be*."

This is the common cant of thoſe both in higher and lower ſtations, who deſire to put a negative upon a review of our eccleſiaſtical ſyſtem. It is ſomething, indeed, that, with reſpect to our preſent ſyſtem, they will own that the body of the people ſit in darkneſs; which implies, that, if they were more enlightened, they would have no inconſiderable objections to the forms in which they now acquieſce. But when it is conſidered from whence this light and truth are to come, namely, from thoſe records which have preſerved to us the Goſpel, as it was preached by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, is it not a little ſtrange, that *this* truth ſhould be *unſeaſonable*, and this light *intolerable*, after the Goſpel has been taught, received, and profeſſed, in a ſucceſſion of generations, for near eighteen hundred years?

But to examine his Lordſhip's doctrine a little more narrowly. What the Biſhop calls the prejudices, tempers, and conſtitutions of men, are known to be much oftener, and in much greater abundance, on the ſide of folly, falſhood, and vice, than of truth, virtue, and good ſenſe. Prejudice and partial affection carry their point every day, againſt the loudeſt remonſtrances of reaſon, and the

the cleareſt light of revelation. If this were a new, or an incidental caſe, peculiar to the preſent, and unknown to former times, we might be at a loſs for directions how to deal with it, and excuſeable enough for taking up with the beſt expedients that human prudence ſhould ſuggeſt. But theſe, in fact, are the very ſame circumſtances in which our bleſſed Saviour found the world at his firſt appearance. The prejudices, tempers, and conſtitutions of the men of thoſe days, had in them the very ſame perverſeneſs and obliquity, of which we complain at this hour; and from the fatal effects of which *Jeſus* came to ſave ſuch as would hear his voice.

According to the Biſhop's maxim, our Saviour ſhould have ordered his *propoſals* with a view to the prejudices and tempers of the Scribes and Phariſees, the leading men among the people to whom he made his firſt overtures of reformation, and from whom the people derived their own prejudices and tempers.

Inſtead of this, *Jeſus* ſeems to have formed what this right rev. author calls an *eccleſiaſtical Utopia*. He paid little reſpect to the eſtabliſhed church, as it was then modelled. He openly reproved, and by his teaching oppoſed, the traditionary religion of the rulers of the Jewiſh church, both as to their forms of worſhip and points of doctrine; and taught many things on thoſe occaſions, which ſhew he never intended *his* religion ſhould be ſhut

up

up in a *national* church, or eſtabliſhed upon *excluſive* conditions. The conſequence was, that he was purſued by the great churchmen of thoſe times with their utmoſt vengeance, even to the death.

This he knew from the beginning, would be his fate; nevertheleſs, what is ſtill more ſtrange, he commanded his apoſtles, and in them, as it ſhould ſeem, all who were to ſucceed them in the ſame province, to follow his example, and to adhere to the ſame methods of reforming the world. It ſeems, he committed the event to the providence of God, who favoured the plan ſo far at leaſt, as to make it probable in the higheſt degree, that if any other had been ſubſtituted in its place, there would not have been one Chriſtian this day in the world.

In anſwer to this, it hath been ſuggeſted, that the circumſtances of both clergy and people, are very different *now*, from what they were in the apoſtles days. The manners and opinions of mankind, it is ſaid, have undergone great alterations, inſomuch that if miniſters were to inſiſt, either upon the ſevere perſonal diſcipline, or the unadorned ſimplicity of faith and worſhip preached and practiſed by the apoſtles, men would rather be prejudiced againſt, than converted to the practice and profeſſion of the Goſpel.

But is not this to ſuppoſe that upon every change of public manners, upon every fluctuation of popular opinions, the teachers of religion have

have a power of varying their rule? that is to ſay, to ſuppoſe what is utterly falſe? Can they ſhew any other authentic rule of teaching religion, beſides that in the New Teſtament? Does the N. T. mention any powers given to preachers to judge of *fitneſs* and *expediency* in reſpect of events, and in conſequence of that foreſight, to vary their doctrine and accommodate it to ſuppoſed exigencies? If they have no ſuch powers, and yet act as if they had, what are they doing but ſuperſeding the authority of Chriſt in his own kingdom, and ſetting themſelves up in his place?

Some, indeed, lay ſo much to the account of the great difference there is between the manners and ſentiments of the preſent times, and thoſe of our Saviour's miniſtry, as to ſuppoſe that a diſcretionary power in the Clergy to accommodate themſelves and their doctrines to the times, muſt ariſe from the nature of the caſe; which they endeavour to juſtify by various arguments, particularly the example of St. *Paul*, who *became all things to all men.*

In anſwer to this, I ſhall, for the preſent, admit that the manners and opinions of the preſent generation, are as remote as you will from the genius and ſpirit of the goſpel; yet you cannot ſay they are more remote from it, than the manners and opinions of the Jews and Gentiles were. On another hand, the manners and principles of the Jews and Gentiles, were in no better agreement with

with each other, than either of them were with the Goſpel. The Goſpel was nevertheleſs preached to them both, as a common meaſure of believing and obeying unto ſalvation, and that without any of thoſe accommodations and allowances which are now pleaded for; ſo that all arguments for ſuch accommodation from *the reaſon of the thing*, are abſolutely excluded by the practice of our Saviour himſelf.

As to the example of St. *Paul*, it is firſt to be conſidered, for what end he *became all* things *to all men*, namely *that he might gain ſome*. *Gain them?* To what? — Why to the profeſſion and practice of Chriſtianity. We may be ſure then, that he neither indulged them, nor complied with them, in any thing which was a diſparagement to the profeſſion, or inconſiſtent with the practice to which he laboured to *gain them*. Dr. *Middleton* hath inſinuated that this ſaying of St. *Paul* is hyperbolical [*H*], or, in his own language, *had in it ſome degree of fiction*. And it is probable the Apoſtle meant no more than that ſort of accommodation to the humours of men, which is implied in the *ſon of man's coming eating and drinking*, by way of ſhewing, that the auſterer diſcipline of *John*, was not *eſſential* to the faith and duties of the goſpel. Let our modern *accommodaters* keep within the ſame bounds, and we ſhall willingly allow them the benefit of theſe precedents.

[*H*] Miſcellaneous Tracts, p. 306.

2. But

2. But this is not all, St. *Paul* and his companion *Luke* have between them left us ſome remarkable inſtances of the Apoſtle's compliance with, as well as of his indulgence to perſons of different religious prejudices. His permiſſion to Chriſtians to feaſt or eat with the Gentiles, is plainly qualified by ſeveral cautions. Some of his accommodation to the Jewiſh cuſtoms, turned our very unhappily; and there are evident marks in the epiſtle to the *Galatians*, that he thought he had formerly gone too far in his compliances with them; and he plainly condemns the practice of circumciſion as deſtructive of the faith of the Goſpel, at leaſt in a Greek or a Gentile. And yet it appears he once thought it neceſſary to circumciſe *Timothy*, who was of Greek extraction by the father's ſide, for no other reaſon aſſigned, but *becauſe of the Jews who were in thoſe quarters* [*I*].

Theſe matters of fact then, are neceſſary to be taken in, to illuſtrate the apoſtles meaning in theſe large expreſſions. And it is no leſs expedient for us to look at matters of fact nearer home, to ſet bounds to the fancies which we are too apt to build upon them.

It is now about fifty years ſince the venerable Biſhop of *Wincheſter* advanced this maxim of conſidering the world *as it is*, rather than as it ought to be; and as the maxim itſelf has been almoſt univerſally adopted by the clergy, it is but reaſon-

[*I*] Acts, xvi. 1—3.

able

able to expect it ſhould, by this time, have been juſtified by better fruits, than would have been brought forth by our endeavouring to reform the world by the ſtricter precepts of the Goſpel. Are then the men, or the times, upon whom theſe accommodating methods have been tried, in any better diſpoſition than they were, before they were introduced? Are their prejudices rooted out, their tempers ſoftened, their conſtitutions refined, or their manners purified by theſe prudential expedients of reformation? We have ſeen what Mr. *White* thinks of the matter: and we are told from other hands, that it is the ſame ſort of prejudice, &c. which overawes our ſuperiors from attempting to reform, what they are very ſenſible greatly wants reforming, in more reſpects than one.

The Biſhop of *Wincheſter's* maxim is, however, in as much repute as ever. And no wonder. Doctrines which have in them ſo much eaſe and convenience, with reſpect to the teachers of religion, and ſo plauſible an air of moderation towards their diſciples, are in no danger of going out of faſhion, let them be confronted with ever ſo many plain facts, or refuted by ever ſo ſolid reaſoning. They paſs from hand to hand with the perfect approbation of all ſides; and with whomſoever it is that we have any diſputes, of which the conduct of the clergy makes a part, diſquiſitors, diſſenters, infidels, or heretics, the

apology

apology is always drawn from the nature and neceſſity of the *times*.

Thus in a late anſwer to Lord *Bolingbroke*, we are informed that, "There are times and occa-"ſions when politeneſs, civil-prudence, and the "private motives of friendſhip, OUGHT to deter-"mine a man *who is to live in the world* to comply "with the ſtate and condition of the times, and "even to chuſe the *worſe* inſtead of the *better* "method of doing good [*K*]."

How good things may be improved by keeping! In the beginning of the century, compliance with the times, was only a matter of *prudence* and *expedience*; it is *now* become a *duty*. The adverſaries of the doctrine heretofore were only harmleſs theoretical *Utopians*. They are now, *fanatics*, *enthuſiaſts*, and *bigots*. — Juſtice however muſt be done to this laſt writer; who tells us, that "there are times and occaſions when the "ſobereſt thinker (*i. e.* he who is neither fanatic, "enthuſiaſt, nor bigot) will confeſs, that the in-"tereſts of particulars, ſhould give way to "thoſe of the public." And one of theſe occaſions, it ſeems, is this on which he writes: and where he thinks it would be wrong to admit theſe conſiderations of politeneſs, civil-prudence, &c. — How ſo? Becauſe the noble author laid the author of the View, under a neceſſity to repreſent him both as *deteſtable* and *ridiculous*, on

[*K*] Apology prefixed to the third Letter of a View of Lord *Bolingbroke's* philoſophy, p. xlix. 1 edit. 1755.

account of the freedoms he had taken with *Moſes*, *Paul*, &c. and ſo far his reaſon is good. But Lord *Bolingbroke* had taken great freedoms (greater than with *Moſes* and *Paul*) with the modern clergy of our own eſtabliſhment. Had the author of the *View* therefore, been able to have prevailed upon his own *politeneſs* and *civil-prudence* to have defended *Moſes* and *Paul* with ſobriety and ſeriouſneſs, and to have choſen on this occaſion, what he calls the *worſe* method of doing good, ſome people will be of opinion that his arguments would have loſt nothing by it, either of their *ſtrength* or *perſpicuity*; and he would certainly have avoided *one* evil ſuſpicion, which has ſtuck to him, and of which his *friendly monitor* forgot to apprize him; namely, that his *free* treatment of Lord *Bolingbroke*, did not ariſe ſo much from his zeal for true religion, as from his ſenſibility of the affront offered to the modern clergy; in which, it is but too viſible, the author of the *View* is *perſonally* concerned.

But what are thoſe times and occaſions which call for this ſtrain of good breeding? The learned writer hath not condeſcended to inform us, nor what ſort of good may be done by it. When religion is to be promoted or defended, a plain man would be apt to think, that no times or occaſions ſhould make it a duty to chuſe a *worſe* method of doing good, but where a *better* is abſolutely not to be had. But where, as in the preſent caſe, a man is ſuppoſed to have *both* methods

thods before him, and yet *ought* to poſtpone the *better*, and chuſe the *worſe*, the obligation ſhould ſeem to ariſe from ſome Law, or to refer to ſome rule of moral practice, which hath no connexion with the Chriſtian religion.

The learned writer, indeed, hath limited this duty to *the man who is to live in the world*. But which of us is *not* to live in the world, in the common acceptation of that expreſſion? If indeed by a man who is to live in the world, is meant a man who is *ſo* to live in it, as never *to give offence* ("the thing, ſays this writer, of all "to be moſt dreaded *by thoſe who know the world*,") it is well if, in the goſpel-account, this politeneſs, civil-prudence, and private friendſhip, turn out to be any better than, hypocriſy, partiality, worldly wiſdom, and reſpect of perſons.

The plain truth is juſt this. The prejudices, tempers, conſtitutions, &c. of mankind, with reſpect to the expedients of reformation propoſed in the Chriſtian ſcriptures, have been much the ſame in all ages ſince the heavenly preacher of them firſt appeared. Senſual, worldly-minded, and incorrigible men *hated* him, becauſe he reproved their pride, their avarice, their hypocriſy, and other vices, without reſerve. And ſuch men hate ſuch preachers to this hour, and will hate them to the end of the world. And yet ſuch doctrines muſt be preached, with the ſame unreſerved freedom, if the men who are appointed to the office would diſcharge it faithfully. Un-

leſs our prudent and polite reformers can produce a new revelation, exhibiting new ſanctions, and new terms of ſalvation; or unleſs they can ſhew (what indeed ſome of them have more than half inſinuated) that the ſame occaſions which the men of that generation gave to our Saviour, exiſt no longer, and that pride, avarice, hypocriſy, ſuperſtition, and ſenſuality, are baniſhed from the face of the earth. When they have made either of theſe appear, then, but not till then, we can allow them to *accommodate* themſelves, their doctrines, and expedients of reformation, to the taſte and temper of the times.

But to proceed a little farther in our examination of theſe commodious maxims. What conſequences do theſe cautious reformers apprehend, from propoſing to the world ſuch meaſures of reformation, as are abſolutely good in themſelves, and tend to make men what they *ought* TO BE? Few trials, that I know of, have been made upon this plan, nor does it appear by any repeated experiments, what it is that would diſappoint them.

On this occaſion we are told, "that factions "would be created, dangerous to civil govern-"ment itſelf, and productive of evils in ſociety, "which all the good that could poſſibly reſult "from ſuch endeavours to reform the world, "would not counterbalance."

I cannot repreſent this argument in any terms ſo well adapted to give it its full weight and luſtre,

as thoſe of a late ſenſible writer, whoſe views and occaſions will be explained in the ſequel.

"I am very ſenſible, ſays this gentleman, that "the truth of any point, or the certainty of any "matter of fact, can never be determined by the "conſequences that flow from it; yet I think it a "part which *virtue*, as well as *prudence* preſcribes, "to be more *reſerved*, and *cautious* of meddling, "where little or no advantage can be gained to "ſociety; but where conſequences may poſſibly "prove hurtful; and eſpecially where the point "in queſtion is only *ſpeculative*. For ſpeculative "truth, tho' it greatly contributes to the perfec-"tion of human nature, may yet be recovered, "in ſome caſes, at too dear a rate. What ever "unſettles the foundations of government, af-"fects the well-being of ſociety, or ANY WAY "*diſturbs the peace and quiet of the world*, is of "very deſtructive conſequence; and the man "who ſhould retrieve fifty ſuch truths, at the "expence of one faction, would, in my opinion, "be a very pernicious member of ſociety [*L*]."

Either this ingenious perſon hath written himſelf quite out of ſight of his own principles, or I am not clearſighted enough to diſcover his meaning. Let me firſt confeſs my own ignorance.

1. I cannot comprehend how any truth that is merely *ſpeculative*, can contribute to the perfection of human nature. Human nature has

[*L*] Remarks on Dr. *Chapman's* Charge, &c. p. 9, 10.

always appeared to me to advance the neareſt to perfection, by the means of moral habits, formed and invigorated by principles of truth, and of *religious* truth in particular. Whatever diſcoveries may be made by the way of *ſpeculation*, if they may not be turned to ſome practical uſe, or improvement of the *moral man*, they will paſs with me, for little better than the groundleſs viſions of imagination.

2. It is equally myſterious to me, how truths that are merely *ſpeculative*, ſhould unſettle the foundations of government.

3. Nor can I poſſibly conceive, how ſuch truths as greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature, ſhould *affect* the well-being of ſociety. I mean, as I ſuppoſe he does, affect it with an evil influence.

4. In the laſt place, I ſhould have apprehended, that the recovery of *fifty* truths, *which greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature*, would pay the expence of *one* faction at leaſt, even though the peace and quiet of the world ſhould be, in ſome meaſure, diſturbed by it; unleſs we muſt ſay, that little or no advantage is gained to ſociety, by the recovery of *ſo many* ſuch truths, as greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature.

As this ingenious writer has, on this occaſion, contrary to his cuſtom, expreſſed himſelf looſely and ambiguouſly, I dare not take upon me to aſ-

certain his meaning, I imagine it however to be this. That where ſpeculative errors are eſtabliſhed by public authority, it is better to let them reſt, than to attempt to remove them at the hazard of a faction, or by any ſuch oppoſition or remonſtrance, as any way diſturbs the peace and quiet of the world.

Now to this doctrine I would readily ſubſcribe, if I knew of any truth or error of the *religious* kind (and of ſuch truth and error this author is here treating) that could be called *merely ſpeculative*; that is to ſay, ſuch truth or error, as hath no influence or tendency to improve, or debaſe, the religious conduct of thoſe who entertain or reject it reſpectively. With reſpect to ſuch truth, or ſuch error, 'tis of little conſequence what becomes of them. But few are the truths or errors that I have met with of this complexion.

It ſhould ſeem indeed, that this remarker does not reſtrain this *prudence* and *caution* to theſe inſignificant truths and errors. For, he ſays, "WHATEVER unſettles the foundations of go-"vernment, &c. is of very deſtructive conſe-"quence."

Can this be admitted, without condemning the practice of the apoſtles, and firſt preachers of chriſtianity?

Theſe, ſaid their *Theſſalonian* adverſaries, *that have turned the world upſide down, are come hither alſo, whom Jaſon hath received; and theſe all do*

contrary to the decrees of Cæſar, *ſaying, there is another king, one* Jesus [*M*].

I expect here to be told, that the apoſtles were falſely accuſed, and that they made no attempt to unſettle Cæſar's government. I acknowledge it. But the *faction* was formed upon that ſuppoſition, and operated on the well-being of ſociety, upon that occaſion at leaſt, with as much malignity, as if the charge had been ever ſo true. And may not the ſame thing happen again? Has it not happened in many inſtances, that pious and zealous *reformers* have been accuſed of diſturbing the public peace, when they were as innocent as the apoſtles themſelves of any ſuch intention?

Beſides, no ſenſible man can doubt but the immediate eſtabliſhment of chriſtianity in thoſe early days, would have made great alterations in the *Gentile*, as well as the *Jewiſh* civil and religious polity. The total abolition of the latter was the inevitable conſequence of the Kingſhip of Jeſus; and what ſtruggles and tumults were occaſioned by attempting to introduce it, the ſacred hiſtory has fairly informed us. And yet I preſume, our Lord imagined, the truths that would thus be *recovered* to mankind, would more than atone for theſe temporary inconveniences. Otherwiſe he would certainly have taken and preſcribed other meaſures.

[*M*] Acts, xvii. 6, 7.

The learned writer, with whom I am making ſo free, was a ſecond to Dr. *Middleton* in the controverſy concerning the *continuance* of *miraculous powers* in *the Chriſtian church*, and a very able one; and I the rather hope I have not miſunderſtood or miſrepreſented his meaning in the foregoing citation, as he immediately ſubjoins to it the following apology for meddling in *that* controverſy.

"But, in the preſent debate, [concerning miraculous powers, &c.] all ſuch fears are vain "and chimerical. Where we may diſpute for "ever, without unſettling or diſturbing any "thing, except ſome fanciful ſyſtems, which have "been ingrafted on the religion of the goſpel, "and which ſome of our preſent churchmen, for "reaſons of policy, have been endeavouring to "defend, as abſolutely neceſſary to ſupport it."

That is to ſay, "The miraculous powers of the "poſt-apoſtolic church, are not affirmed in an "eſtabliſhed Article, or Homily." Had that been the caſe, the point could not have been diſputed without unſettling, or at leaſt diſturbing, ſomething more than a fanciful ſyſtem of our preſent churchmen. Something with a more ſubſtantial ſupport, than the *political* reaſons abovementioned.

I am of opinion, that, if ſome of our ancient churchmen in former times had foreſeen this controverſy, or if ſome of our modern doctors had even yet the power to bring it about, the queſtion,

ſo

ſo far as *legal* deciſion could give it a ſanction, would not be found ſo naked of this kind of ſupport. Had this point been ſecured in due time, the Doctors *Chapman*, *Stubbing*, *Church*, and *Dodwell*, who, for the general, have been ſo *tame* in the controverſy that you might *ſtroak* them, would have thundered about Dr. *Middleton's* ears from the artillery of an eſtabliſhment, the moment he had made his appearance in that province; and have plyed him with their great and ſmall ſhot, as long as ever he was in a condition to be galled by it.

I ſhould be glad to know, what, in ſuch circumſtances, would have been the conduct of this his ingenious advocate? He will hardly ſay, that little or no advantage could be gained to ſociety by this debate, after it has been demonſtrated by Dr. *Middleton*, Mr. *Toll*, and *himſelf*, how much the Proteſtant cauſe is intereſted in the determination of ſo important a fact. He calls the ſyſtem contrary to that he eſpouſes, a *fanciful* one, unſupported by any thing, but the dirty politics of intereſted churchmen. Would the circumſtance of being *eſtabliſhed* have added any truth or ſolidity to the ſyſtem, or given it any more merit with reſpect to the Proteſtant cauſe? If not, what would there be in the *one* caſe, that ought to hinder a reaſonable and conſcientious Proteſtant from expoſing and confuting it, more than in the *other*? Would it be ſufficient to excuſe a man ſo perſuaded,

ſuaded, that a faction might be occaſioned by the diſpute, and ſomething unſettled and diſturbed, which might affect the peace and quiet or welfare of ſociety?

Now, it is very poſſible that ſome other perſon, equally diſcerning, able, and conſcientious as the Remarker, may think ſome *other* ſyſtem of theſe fanciful divines juſt as pernicious to the cauſe of true religion, and juſt as void of truth and reaſon, as this of the *miraculous powers*; ſome ſyſtem, I mean, which is under the protection of an eſtabliſhment. What is to be done? Is this man to ſit down and acquieſce with the herd, under the apprehenſion of cauſing a *faction*, and unſettling, in ſome degree at leaſt, the peace and quiet of the world? Had this been the perſuaſion of good men at *all* periods, what had been the creed of the Proteſtant, or indeed of the Chriſtian world at this inſtant?

It is well for us that ſome, both of our forefathers and contemporaries, have had none of theſe ſcruples. And it may perhaps add ſome light to the preſent enquiry, to remark how it has fared with ſome of theſe later adventurers, upon a point of orthodoxy, of which all the churches of *Europe* are extremely tenacious.

It is well known, that, ſince the commencement of the preſent century, the great *Athanaſius* has been attacked by a ſucceſſion of eminent men, who could not be brought to think his ſyſtem

ſtem leſs *fanciful*, for being encloſed in the fortreſs of an eſtabliſhed Creed.

Mr. *Whiſton* led the way. A faction enſued, and the event was, his expulſion from a famous univerſity, and an excluſion from all other preferment. Dr. *Clarke* made the next effort, nor could he, who was a much more temperate man, prevent a faction; and what would have come of it in the end, if an effectual interpoſition from the *higher* powers had not over-ruled thoſe of the *lower*, none can tell. More lately, a learned and eminent prelate, in a neighbouring kingdom, opened the trenches once more before the formidable *Athanaſius*, with all his myrmidons and fortifications about him. *Faction* was again the conſequence; and, had not death ſnatch'd him off the ſtage in a lucky moment (of which I am informed as I am writing this), he might probably have been ſent, whither his mitre and his rochet would not have followed him. There were ſeveral others of leſs note, who had their *factions* as well as theſe more eminent leaders; but theſe are enough to explain the caſe in hand.

Let the next queſtion be concerning theſe *factions*. Whence did they ariſe? As far as I can perceive, the laity of Great Britain and Ireland were all this while very much at their eaſe, carried on their affairs with their uſual tranquillity and ſucceſs; nor did I ever hear, that the well-being of ſociety was at all affected, at any

of

of thoſe periods of time when the Trinitarian controverſy was on the anvil. Hence it ſhould ſeem, that no factions either aroſe or ſpread among the common people on theſe occaſions; and yet factions there were, as appears both by the offence given by, and the moleſtation returned to, the culprits above-mentioned. We muſt look for them then among the clergy.

Who expelled Mr. *Whiſton?* The churchmen of *Cambridge*. Who attempted to proſcribe Dr. *Clarke?* The churchmen of the Lower Houſe of Convocation. Who took counſel againſt the Biſhop of *Clogher?* The great churchmen of *Ireland*. Who proſecuted Dr. *Carter* in the eccleſiaſtical court? The church-officers of *Deal*, at the inſtigation, as it is ſaid, of a churchman of that place. Who proſecuted Mr. *Emlyn* in *Ireland*, and Meſſieurs *Pierce*, *Withers*, and *Hallet*, in *England?* The diſſenting clergy, abetted, as appeared openly in the firſt caſe [*N*], and as was ſtrongly ſuſpected in the latter [*O*], by ſome great churchmen of the eſtabliſhed church. In one word, what lay-man who was not the inſtrument of ſome one or more churchmen, was concerned in theſe *factions?*

Let it then no longer be ſaid, that the *times*, but that the *churchmen*, are not ripe for a refor-

[*N*] See *Emlyn's* Works, vol. I. p. 26.

[*O*] *Tindal's* Tranſl. of *Rapin*, 8vo. 1746. vol. XXVII. p. 344.

mation.

mation. The *impracticability*, as far as yet appears, ariſes wholly from that quarter. Let the churchmen of the eſtabliſhment ſhew themſelves deſirous of, and ſincere in ſolliciting, a reformation of our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution; and, if they miſcarry in their endeavours, it is but equitable that the impracticability ſhould no longer be put to their account.

Here, methinks, I perceive a ſly orthodox brother, who has all this while hung his ears in a corner, begin now to prick them up, and come forward with this expoſtulation in his mouth: "What! reform according to the deteſtable "ſyſtems of *Arius* or *Socinus!* Is it not *that* you "are pleading for? And does not this confirm "the ſuſpicions of thoſe who imputed theſe views "to the *free* and *candid Diſquiſitors?*"

Soft and fair. Let the Diſquiſitors anſwer for themſelves and their own views and principles; but do not prejudge them beforehand. They have laid before you a great many particulars, which perhaps give more *open* and *immediate* offence to the common people, than the doctrines of the *Trinity*; about which, I am apt to think, few of them form any ideas. Had you ſhewn a diſpoſition to reform theſe *neceſſary matters*, and had you ſet about it with alacrity, time and credit would have been given you for the reſt. This I preſume to ſay on the part of the Diſquiſitors.

On

On my own part, I am neither afraid nor aſhamed to call for a review of our Trinitarian forms, as what, I think, is quite neceſſary for the honour of the church herſelf. Conſider how the caſe ſtands on the very face of our preſent forms.

"So that in ALL THINGS (πάντα πανταχοῦ) ſays the "*Athanaſian* Creed, the Unity in Trinity, and the "Trinity in Unity, is [or *ought*] to be worſhip-"ed." Is this the caſe in ALL our forms of worſhip? Turn back to the *Litany*, and you will ſee three diſtinct invocations of the three Perſons, to each of whom the term *God* is aſſigned; implying a ſufficiency in each, in his *perſonal* capacity, to hear and grant the petition. Inſtances, equally remarkable and notorious, of our deviation from the *Athanaſian* maxim, might be given in great abundance. What miſerable ſophiſtry Dr. *Waterland* employed to make our liturgical forms conſiſtent, has been noticed in theſe papers: nor, to ſay the truth, is Dr. *Clarke* under much leſs embarraſſment. And, while theſe inconſiſtencies remain, I cannot ſee how a defender of our forms of worſhip ſhould be in much better agreement with *Athanaſius*, than *Whiſton*, *Clarke*, or *Clayton*. To make theſe matters *conſiſtent*, is certainly the proper object of a *review*, on which ſide ſoever of the contradiction the truth may lye.

One

One of the laſt pieces publiſhed on the ſubject of the Trinity, was, *An Appeal to the Common-ſenſe of all Chriſtian People*, &c. which book has paſſed through two editions without any ſort of reply that I have heard of *. This looks as if *able* writers were not *willing* to meddle with the ſubject, or that *willing* writers were not *able* to manage it. Many of the wiſer and more thinking part of the clergy have been long ſick of the *Athanaſian* Creed, and have, by degrees, diſuſed it in their churches. And many of the congregations, where it has been ſo diſuſed, if by accident an officiating ſtranger ſhould read it to them in its courſe, have been known to ſignify their ſurprize and diſlike by very manifeſt tokens [*P*].

From theſe particulars I conclude, and venture to repeat it, that, when our leading churchmen tell us of the *impracticability* of an eccleſiaſtical

* When this was written, I did not know of Dr. *Macdonell's* anſwer to the *Appeal*, and much leſs of the *Appellant's* replication, intituled *The Trinitarian Controverſy reviewed*, printed for *Millar*, 1760. It is ſomething, however, to my purpoſe, that no *Engliſhman* of any name has offered to confute the *Appeal*, and that the *Athanaſian* doctrine ſeems to be conſigned to the ſole protection of our *Iriſh* champion, who makes ſo indifferent a figure in the hands of the *Appellant*, that probably we ſhall hear no more of him; the ſaid *Appellant* having ſaid enough to deter wiſe men of both ſides from meddling farther in the controverſy, unleſs in the way of a Review.

[*P*] See *A ſerious and diſpaſſionate Inquiry*, &c. concerning ſome paſſages in the public Liturgy, *Athanaſian* Creed, &c. p. 80—95, 96. Of this I have been an eye-witneſs more than once.

reformation,

reformation, through the unripeneſs of the times, the true meaning is, that they cannot obtain *their own* conſent to any meaſure, or to any attempt of that ſort. And no marvel. A reformation that ſhould reach to the extent of our deviations from the ſcriptures (and, when the door is once opened, who knows how far a reformation might extend?) would not ſtop at a few liturgical forms and ceremonies. The conductors of it might probably proceed to inquire, how far the preſent polity of the church ſtood upon a ſcriptural foundation? And ſhould ſuch inquiry be purſued to good effect, the conſequence might be, that the repoſe of ſome great churchmen would be grievouſly diſturbed, their labours increaſed, the nature and tendency of their preſent occupations greatly altered, and their *temporalities* reduced to a due proportion to their duties and ſervices.

The worthy friend who ſent me the firſt notice of the demiſe of Biſhop *Clayton*, and an account of the clerical machinations againſt him, incloſed in the ſame packet a ſmall manuſcript, intituled *The Biſhop of* Clogher's *Speech, made in the Houſe of Lords in* Ireland, Feb. 2, 1756 [2]. I will not anſwer for the authenticity of this little reſcript, though it ſeems to have paſſed for genuine in that country, and it is certain that the biſhop moved in parliament for ſuch a bill as is there mentioned.

[2] It has ſince been printed at *London*, for *Baldwin* and *Cooper*, 1757.

In this ſpeech I find the following paſſage: "I "am perſuaded, that if my lords the biſhops will "but ſhew themſelves inclined to amend, what "they cannot but acknowledge to be amiſs, they "will find the laity ready to aſſiſt and ſupport "them rather than otherwiſe."

No man knew the world better than the late Biſhop of *Clogher*. His adverſaries objected it to him, after they had ranſacked all the obſcure corners of the kingdom for ſcandal, that he knew it but *too well*. Even *they* therefore might take his word on this head. But indeed the thing ſpeaks for itſelf. Whenever the people ſhall ſee this *impracticability* ſubdued on the part of the clergy, it is impoſſible they ſhould not be convinced both of the *utility* of the meaſure, and of the *integrity* of thoſe who undertake and promote it. Such inſtances of ſelf-denial, and ſo many circumſtances of eaſe and profit ſacrificed to the public welfare and edification, cannot but give them the higheſt eſteem and affection for ſo faithful and diſintereſted Paſtors.

I am willing, however, that our ſpiritual fathers, among whom are ſome perſons of diſtinguiſhed merit, ſhould have the benefit of every plea that can poſſibly be offered for their inactivity and acquieſcence in our preſent inconvenient and unedifying ſyſtem. And if any of them can derive any conſolation to themſelves, or any apology to the world for their conduct, from the following conceſſion, I ſhall not deſire to deprive them of it.

"Though

"Though the church of Chriſt," ſaith a pious and learned writer, "has been thus corrupted "[*viz.* by copying the church of *Rome* more or "leſs] in all ages and nations, yet there have "been, and will be in all, many who receive the "ſeal of GOD, and worſhip him in ſpirit and in "truth. And of theſe, as many have filled high "ſtations as low ones. Such perſons, though "they have concurred in the ſupport of what is "contrary to the pure religion, have, however, "done it innocently with reſpect to themſelves, "being led thereto by *invincible prejudices* [*R*]."

What particular examples this good man had in his eye, would be hard to ſay. Perhaps, ſome of the firſt Biſhops of the Chriſtian church, commonly called *the Fathers*, as well as Paſtors of more modern times. Let us pitch upon a few of the moſt eminent of theſe, and begin with the upper claſſes firſt.

The *Fathers*, ſo called, have ever been eſteemed the lights of the Chriſtian church, and have been juſtly revered for their piety and ſanctity of manners. But no one will deny, that they were deeply prejudiced in favour of ſome things, which greatly diſfigured and corrupted true religion. The queſtion is, how far theſe *prejudices* were *invincible?*

Jerom is one who hath figured in all ages, both on account of the auſterity of his diſcipline, and

[*R*] Dr. *David Hartley's* Obſervations on Man, vol. II. p. 371.

the ſuperiority of his learning. Both popiſh and proteſtant writers have, by turns, put their cauſe under his patronage; till the proteſtants found they were loſers upon the balance, and from thenceforward began to look a little more narrowly into the character and merits of the man; and then they found his genius was wholly turned to *bragging* and *diſſimulation* [*S*], that he frequently contradicted himſelf [*T*], and paid little regard to truth, when he had a controverſial point to carry, for which *Le Clerc* gives a very probable reaſon, namely, his reading and admiring *Cicero*. "For *Cicero*," ſays this excellent Critic, "provided what he ſays ſuits his preſent purpoſe, "and may make an impreſſion on his audience, "takes no thought whether it be true, nor cares "at all whether he hath contradicted it elſe-"where [*U*]."

[*S*] *Ingenium* Hieronymi *totum fuit ad jactationem et diſſimulationem compoſitum.* Le Clerc, *Quæſtiones Hieronymianæ*, III. p. 62.

[*T*] Le Clerc, *Sentimens de quelques Theologiens d'Hollande*, &c. Lettre xiii. p. 307.

[*U*] *J. Clerici* Quæſtiones Hieronymianæ, VIII. § xiii. p. 248. He gives ſeveral inſtances of this conduct of *Cicero*, and obſerves after *Quintilian*, and after *Cicero* himſelf, that the definition of an Orator ſhould not be what it uſually was, *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, but *vir callidus mentiendi pro re nata, et diſſimulandi peritus*. *Le Clerc* ſhews that *Jerom* was deeply tinctured with this oratorical craft, and had his *orationes cauſarum et temporum, non judicii*, as well as *Tully*, which is likewiſe acknowledged by *Eraſmus*, his great advocate. But what ſhall we ſay to a certain Chriſtian divine and critic, who will have it

Another

Another excellent pen hath proved theſe contradictions upon more of the Fathers, particularly in one inſtance which ſhews a diſingenuity,

" that in all this *Cicero* acted no *unfair* part, becauſe forſooth " he acted it not in his *real*, but his *perſonated* character." *Poſtſcript to* Dr. Warburton's *Viſitation ſermon*, printed for *Fletcher Gyles*, 1738. p. 31. A *perſonated* character is a *fictitious* one, and whoever puts on ſuch a character *with intent to deceive*, ſeems to me not only to act an *unfair* but an *immoral* part. " Hold, ſays the nimble caſuiſt, *unfair* is an expreſſion that " relates to a man's *breeding*, to a point of civility, in not im- " poſing on *good company*, rather than his *morals*." The reader will be pleaſed to take notice, that this *good company* was often a bench of judges, aſſembled to try cauſes of the greateſt importance to the peace and welfare of the community. Had *Cicero* appeared on the ſtage in the character of *Agamemnon*, and ſpoke nothing but what *Euripides* put into his mouth, the *good company* would have had no reaſon to complain, either of his *rudeneſs* or his *diſhoneſty*. But when he appears in the naked character of *Cicero* the advocate, and endeavours to impoſe upon a ſolemn tribunal, by a falſe repreſentation of facts in a criminal cauſe, he forfeits all pretenſions to the character of a good patriot or an honeſt man. And, whatever becomes of his *breeding*, in ſo far as he lays claim to theſe titles, is every way *unfair*. There is, however, one inſtance upon record, which impeaches *Tully's* breeding. *Quintilian* informs us, that he boaſted, *ſe tenebras offudiſſe judicibus in cauſâ Cluentii*, Inſtit. Orat. lib. ii. cap. 17. What would be thought of an *Attorney-general* that ſhould *boaſt*, he had amuſed and miſled the Judges of the court of King's-Bench? Certainly not that he was a *polite* man. But what is this to *Jerom?* A great deal to *Jerom*, and to the reſt of the Fathers, defended by the Prefacer to *Julian*. The Apology for *Cicero* extends to the *philoſophical*, as well as rhetorical diſcipline of thoſe times. If that was *blameleſs*, the Fathers who purſued it were ſo too. Their faults were therefore neither faults of the *times* nor of the *men*; that is, the Fathers had no faults at all.

of which the moſt *invincibly prejudiced* among them, muſt have been conſcious. He has ſhewn, from the words of above a dozen of them, that when the queſtion was concerning conformity to any particular religion, they all had the cleareſt conception of the iniquity, as well as impiety of *intolerance*. Nevertheleſs, his adverſary challenged him to ſhew a ſingle inſtance, even in thoſe councils of which theſe fathers were members, and wherein ſome of them preſided, where there was any trace of toleration towards thoſe who differed from the eſtabliſhed faith and opinions. The other knew better than to undertake ſo hopeleſs a taſk; and therefore contented himſelf with ſhewing, that theſe fathers contradicted in their *practice*, what they had ſolemnly laid down for their inconteſtable *principles* [*V*]. On which ſide of ſuch a contradiction can the *invincible* prejudice be ſuppoſed to lie?

To draw nearer to our own times, and to mention one of the moſt illuſtrious characters in all hiſtory. *Eraſmus* ſaw, complained of, cenſured, and expoſed the corruptions of Popery with all freedom. It is hardly poſſible he ſhould not perceive, that all theſe corruptions aroſe from the ſpurious authority to which the Popes laid claim. Many paſſages in his comments and paraphraſes on the New Teſtament, ſhew his

[*V*] *Barbeyrac*, Traité de la Morale des Peres, *Chap.* xii. § xl. p. 185.

cernment

diſcernment in this matter beyond diſpute One, I have pointed out in the note [*W*]. And

[*W*] *Jam vero de Romani Pontificis poteſtate, pene negotioſius diſputatur, quam de poteſtate Dei, dum quærimus de duplici illius poteſtate, et an poſſit abrogare quod ſcriptis apoſtolicis decretum eſt? An poſſit aliquid ſtatuere quod pugnet cum doctrina evangelica? An poſſit novum articulum condere in fidei ſymbolo? Utrum majorem habeat poteſtatem quam Petrus, an parem? An poſſit præcipere angelis? Utrum ſimplex homo ſit, an quaſi Deus, an participet utramque naturam cum Chriſto? An clementior ſit quam fuerit Chriſtus, cum is non legatur quemquam a purgatoriis pœnis revocaſſe? An ſolus omnium non poſſit errare? Sexcenta id genus diſputantur, magnis editis voluminibus, idque a magnis Theologis, præſertim profeſſione religionis inſignibus. Atque hæc fiunt non ſine manifeſta ſuſpicione adulationis, nec ſine injuria Chriſti, ad quem collati principes, quantumvis magni, quid aliud ſunt quam vermiculi? An putant hæc placere* LEONI *noſtro, germano, veroque Chriſti vicario, qui tanquam verus paſtor, nihil habet antiquius ſalute gregis chriſtiani, ut verus Chriſti vicarius, nihil habet carius gloria principis ſui Chriſti.* ERASM. *Annotat.* in 1 *Tim.* i. 6. Upon this paſſage, I would obſerve, 1. That *Eraſmus* very well knew that the *tranſalpine* divines, held all theſe queſtions in the affirmative. 2. That he was little leſs guilty of the *adulation* wherewith he reproaches them, in calling LEO X. *the true vicar of Chriſt, who had nothing more at heart than the glory of his prince, and the ſalvation of the Chriſtian flock.* ERASMUS could be no ſtranger to what all the world knew, namely, that neither the *perſonal*, nor *papal* character of LEO, intituled him to any ſuch encomium. 3. He inſinuates, that theſe ſtrains of adulation were diſagreeable to LEO; and yet it is certain that LEO never diſcouraged them, as *Eraſmus* very well knew. *Palavicini*, defending this pope againſt the cenſures of Father *Paul*, who had ſaid, "that he was better acquainted with profane letters, than with ſacred or religious learning," allows the fact; but in alleviation of it ſays, "that he favoured *ſcholaſtic* divinity, and that he honoured three divines of this complexion with the purple, and made a

to theſe an hundred more might be added. He well knew that the ſcandalous traffick of indulgences was grounded on the papal power, and upon no more of it, than the moſt moderate doctors aſſerted to belong to it. If *Eraſmus* was of a different opinion, he might be retained in the church by a *prejudice*, but certainly not an *invincible* one [*X*].

Come we now to ſome doctors of our own *reformed* church. I do not know of any of our Biſhops ſince the reformation, who has had more incenſe offered up to him, than Archbiſhop *Whitgift*, and that by the very hiſtorian from whom I take the following fact.

In the year 1572, a pamphlet was publiſhed in defence of the famous *Admonition* to parliament, intituled *An Exhortation to the biſhops*,

"fourth maſter of the ſacred palace." *See* BAYLE's Dictionary, Art. LEO X. Rem. [*H*]. Theſe divines then above all others, were LEO's favourites. Was this, do you ſuppoſe, becauſe theſe doctors had determined the queſtions abovementioned in the negative? Was *Eraſmus* a ſtranger to the promotion of three cardinals? or to the characters and ſtudies of the men? *Eraſmus*, I ſay, who knew what was doing in every court, and in every corner of *Europe*? Let it not be ſaid, that theſe incidents might not have happened when *Eraſmus* wrote his *annotations*. Pope LEO X. died before *Eraſmus* publiſhed the *third* of his *five* editions of the N. T. and the ſame annotation is found in them *all*. Can it be ſaid, with the leaſt probability, that *Eraſmus's* prejudices on this head, were *invincible*.

[*X*] See what *Bayle* ſays of this ſubject. Dict. Art. AGRICOLA GEORGE, Rem. [*B*].

wherein

wherein their lordſhips were reminded, "how "hard it was to puniſh the favourers and abet- "tors of the *Admonition*, becauſe they did but "diſcloſe the diſorders of the church of *England*, "and only required a reformation of the ſame, "according to the rule of God's word. Where- "as many lewd and light books and ballads flew "abroad, printed not only without reprehenſion, "but *cum privilegio*."

Archbiſhop *Whitgift* condeſcended to anſwer this pamplet, and to this objection thought fit to ſay, "it was a fault to ſuffer lewd books and ballads "touching *manners*, but it was a greater fault "to ſuffer books and libels, diſturbing the *peace* "*of the church*, and defacing *true religion* [Y]."

Which was to ſay, 1. That lewd books and ballads, printed with privilege, neither diſturbed the peace of the church, nor defaced true religion. 2. That provided the church might quietly enjoy and practiſe her forms, rites, and ceremonies, titles, and emoluments, it was the leſs material what were the *manners* of her members. 3. That *true religion* conſiſted in thoſe forms, rites, ceremonies, titles, and powers, which the puritans were for defacing.

Theſe were *prejudices* with a witneſs, and, if they were *invincible*, what was this man doing ſo

[Y] *Strype's* life of Archbiſhop *Whitgift*, p. 40. who honeſty tells us, p. 50. that he took the account of *Cartwright's* Reply from *Whitgift* himſelf.

long

long, in two divinity chairs in *Cambridge*? Shall we ſay that men's *prejudices* become *invincible* as ſoon as ever you name diſorders in the church, and talk of reforming them?

I make a tranſition from this prelate to Archbiſhop *Wake*, though the ſtep is a pretty long one. But it is not for want of matter in the interval of time, or of *prejudices* in the intermediate occupiers of the ſee of *Canterbury*, but through a willingneſs to ſave the reader's time and my own.

Dr. *Wake*, then Biſhop of *Lincoln*, at the trial of *Sacheverell*, ſpoke with great force and propriety in defence of the Toleration-act, and in vindication of thoſe, who, under a commiſſion from K. *William*, 1689, were appointed to review the liturgy, and other parts of our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, for which, according to the ſaid Dr. *Wake*, there was great occaſion. When the Schiſm-bill was in agitation, Dr. *Wake*, ſtill Biſhop of *Lincoln*, oppoſed it in its progreſs through the Houſe of Lords, and, when paſſed, proteſted againſt it. But when, in the year 1718, this ſame Schiſm-bill was attacked, Dr. *Wake*, then Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, oppoſed the *repeal* of it with all his might, alledging, that it was one of the main *bulwarks* and *ſupporters* of the *eſtabliſhed church*; whereas, in his ſpeech above-mentioned, he inſiſted, that the eſtabliſhed church neither loſt nor ſuffered any thing by the *toleration*

tion of diſſenters. On which ſide lay the invincible prejudice in this caſe [Z]?

This is the fartheſt I chooſe to venture towards the preſent times, over which, if I could, I would drop a veil for the ſake of ſome particulars, who, like *Mercurius trivialis*, have pointed out the right road, without ſtirring an inch themſelves from the centre of the croſs-lanes. Peace be with thoſe of them that are gone. To ſuch of them as remain, I would recommend the ſerious conſideration of what follows that conceſſion laſt cited from Dr. *Hartley*.

"Nevertheleſs, when it ſo happens, that perſons in high ſtations in the church have their "eyes enlightened, and ſee the corruptions and "deficiencies of it, they muſt incur the prophe-"tical cenſures in the higheſt degree, if they ſtill "concur, nay, if they do not endeavour to re-"form, and purge out theſe defilements; and

[Z] "A very ancient and worthy gentleman, now living, "[*viz.* 1755] ſpeaking occaſionally of Archbiſhop *Wake*, in "a company where I lately was, ſaid, he well remembered to "have ſeen his Grace returning from court, on the day that he "had been there to kiſs his Majeſty's hand upon his advance-"ment to the ſee of *Canterbury*. Dining that day at a friend's "houſe, where Dr. *S. Clarke* was one of the gueſts, he men-"tioned this incident; upon which the company, as is common, "made their ſeveral remarks upon that promotion. Dr. *Clarke* "continued ſilent for ſome time; but ſaid at laſt, *We have* "*now an* Archbiſhop *who is* Prieſt *enough.*" Memoir communicated to the author by a learned friend. It ſeems, Dr. *Clarke* knew the man better than ſome others did.

"though

"though they cannot, according to this propo-
"ſition, expect entire ſucceſs, yet they may be
"bleſſed with ſuch a degree, as will abundantly
"compenſate their utmoſt endeavours, and rank
"them with the Prophets and Apoſtles [*A*].

Nothing can poſſibly expoſe the futility of any pretences to defer reformation, upon account of the *unripeneſs* of the times, more effectually, than the ſolemn truths contained in theſe few words. Dr. *Hartley*, indeed, proceeds to obſerve, that "this corruption and degeneracy of the Chriſtian "church — has, all other things being ſuppoſed "to remain the ſame, ſuited our circumſtances "in the beſt manner poſſible, and will continue "to do, as long as it ſubſiſts. God," ſays he, "brings good out of evil, and draws men to "himſelf in ſuch manner, as their natures will "admit of, by external pomp and power, by "things not good in themſelves, and by ſome "that are prophane and unholy. The impurity "of mankind is too groſs, to unite at once with "the ſtrict purity of the goſpel." Hence he takes occaſion to infer, that good men ought to ſubmit to the eccleſiaſtical *powers that be*, for conſcience ſake, as well as to the civil ones. And hence, I do not doubt but *the eccleſiaſtical powers that be*, will infer the *no-neceſſity* of altering any thing in their preſent ſyſtems: and ſo we get rid of theſe *prophetical* cenſures at once.

[*A*] Obſervations on Man, v. I.

But Dr. *Hartley* knew well enough what he ſaid, and was only explaining a caſe which he found in his Bible. The Prophet *Iſaiah* ſpeaks of certain *wiſe* and *prudent* men of his time, who *taught the fear of God by the precept of men* [*B*]. But inaſmuch as the fear of God *was* taught, though by things evil, profane, and unholy in themſelves, whatever Dr. *Hartley* has ſaid concerning God's bringing good out of evil, is juſt as applicable to this period of the *Jewiſh* church, as to any poſterior ſtate of the *chriſtian*. It was upon theſe conſiderations, that our Saviour and his Apoſtles obſerved the law, and preſcribed obedience to thoſe who ſat in *Moſes's* ſeat.

But did theſe conſiderations exculpate the *wiſe* and *prudent* men of *Iſaiah's* time, or the Scribes and Phariſees of Chriſt's days, *who taught for doctrines the commandments of men?* By no means; the prophetical cenſures fell heavily on them both. And if our enlightened churchmen in high ſtations would avoid them, let them go and learn what that meaneth, *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no wiſe enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

They will tell us, perhaps, that, ſenſible as they are of theſe corruptions, they are equally ſenſible of the impoſſibility that their endeavours or remonſtrances ſhould overcome the prejudices or perverſeneſs of their brethren, eſpecially as they would be likely to ſtand alone and unſupported

[*B*] Chap. xxix. 13.

in

in the conflict; and conſequently that there is not the leaſt hope that reformation would be advanced, in whole or in part, by the utmoſt efforts they could make.

But let them try their ſtrength, and then they will have a better right to this apology. Men's endeavours, in this as well as in other caſes, are not to be ſuſpended by the improbability of ſucceſs, or even by trials apparently fruitleſs. We are not judges what ſucceſs our pious endeavours may have in due time. *The kingdom of God cometh not with obſervation.* The light of our teſtimony may appear to be wholly extinguiſhed, and the ſeed we ſow, totally buried and corrupted, and yet the one may blaze out, and the other ſpring up and flouriſh, in its due ſeaſon, how, and where, and when, we are unable to foreſee or even to conceive.

I believe, no book of equal importance ever ſunk ſo ſuddenly into oblivion as the *Free and Candid Diſquiſitions*; nor was any other ever treated with more contempt and ſcorn by thoſe who ought to have paid the greateſt regard to the ſubject of it. In ſhort, its pernicious tendency was echoed in the converſation of every expectant of church-preferment, whoſe ſucceſs depended, in any degree, upon the favour of his eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors.

But, in ſpite of all theſe arts and all this contumely, the book has had no inconſiderable effects among

among particular perſons. It has cauſed the forms of the church to be weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, where they have been found greatly wanting. Many, who formerly paid an implicit veneration to them, begin now to compare and reaſon upon them, and to draw inferences and concluſions by no means in their favour. Theſe impreſſions may poſſibly be working ſilently and imperceptibly to a good end, and they who wiſh well to the proſperity of our *Iſrael*, may reap the good fruit of them, either in the preſent or a future generation. In the mean time, others may *ſleep on, and take their reſt*, perhaps, for many years to come, ſecure in their numbers and influence, againſt the importunity of clamorous Diſquiſitors. The Almighty works thoſe things which are well-pleaſing to him, in his own way, and in his own time, by methods to us inſcrutable, and out of the reach of human projects. Methods of violence ſeldom advance the intereſts of peace and truth. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.* And though *the ſpirit of ſlumber* ſhould have ſeized the public for the preſent, the drowſineſs will in time be ſhaken off, and the hearts and underſtandings of paſtors and people opened, as of one man, and prepared to receive thoſe truths, which at preſent are confined to the breaſts of a few, who, by the bleſſing of God, have found the means of emancipating themſelves from the bondage of *fear*, the idolatry

of

of *lucre*, and the enchantments of *worldly* wiſdom; and who, having born their teſtimony in due ſeaſon, though without effect for the preſent, will be found to have delivered their own ſouls, in the ſolemn hour of viſitation.

Having now examined the pleas that have been offered againſt a reformation of our eccleſiaſtical ſyſtem, it may poſſibly be expected I ſhould deſcend to particulars, and point out ſome of the principal objects, at leaſt, of the reform I may be ſuppoſed to ſollicit.

The equitable reader, however, will recollect, that my ſubject leads me only to *one* particular, the caſe of ſubſcription to human creeds and confeſſions, and other eccleſiaſtical forms, which are required to be aſſented to, as being *agreeable to the word of God*. Undoubtedly, ſuch of theſe as have not this agreement with holy writ, ought not to be retained in the church. Nevertheleſs, as ſomething is due to the ignorance and prejudices of well-meaning people, it may be allowed not to be expedient to diſcontinue the *uſe* of them all at once, provided proper endeavours are uſed to prepare the people for their removal at a ſeaſonable time, by informing them wherein their diſagreement with the Chriſtian ſcriptures conſiſts. But nothing can be more cruel, nothing more inequitable, than to inſiſt, that candidates for the miniſtry ſhould give their ſolemn aſſent and conſent to articles of faith, and modes of diſcipline

and

and worſhip, which it is certain many of them muſt think to be inconſiſtent with the word of God, and which, for that reaſon, they are obliged to wreſt and diſtort from their natural original meaning, before they can reconcile themſelves to this article of conformity.

I am not now looking into any man's heart. I have given indiſputable proofs of what I am here advancing, from the writings of men of great eminence in the church of *England*, by the ſyſtems of ſome or other of whom, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, the common run of ſubſcribers form their ſentiments, or quiet their ſcruples.

This ſtumbling-block ſhould therefore be removed out of the way, with the utmoſt expedition. As a teſt of opinions, it is utterly uſeleſs. It is an affair in which the prejudices of the people have nothing to do. The candidates for the miniſtry are ſuppoſed to be perſons of learning, capable of judging of ſuch things; and liable to be *hurt* and *diſquieted* by ſo diſagreeable a dilemma, as they are brought into by this piece of diſcipline. If there are any of this claſs weak enough to be offended with the removal of this barrier of orthodoxy, why let *them* be gratified too. The reſtoration of their ſenſible and conſcientious brethren to their chriſtian liberty, need not preclude them from expreſſing their belief of, and their veneration for, every thing eſtabliſhed in the church of *England*, in as high terms as they can invent.

But it may be demanded, would you have the church to authorize and ſend forth miniſters and paſtors among the people, without taking any ſecurity of them for the faithful diſcharge of their office, and particularly, without guarding againſt their preaching falſe and erroneous doctrines?

Anſwer: In our office of ordination, there are *eight* queſtions put to every prieſt; the anſwers to the *ſecond*, *fourth*, *fifth*, *ſixth*, and *ſeventh* of which, ſeem to me to contain as ample ſecurity in this behalf, as any Chriſtian church can deſire, or can be authorized to demand.

Here the prieſt declares, and declares it at the altar, "That he is perſuaded that the holy ſcriptures contain ſufficiently all doctrine required of neceſſity for eternal ſalvation, through faith in Jeſus Chriſt; that he has determined, by God's grace, out of the ſaid ſcriptures, to inſtruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing (as required of neceſſity to eternal ſalvation) but that which he ſhall be perſuaded, may be concluded and proved by the ſcripture. — He promiſes, the Lord being his helper, that he will be ready, with all faithful diligence, to baniſh and drive away all erroneous and ſtrange doctrines, contrary to God's word;—that he will uſe both public and private monitions, as well to the ſick as to the whole, within his cure, as need ſhall require,

" and occaſion ſhall be given; — that he will be " diligent in prayers, and in reading of the holy " ſcriptures, and in ſuch ſtudies as help to the " knowledge of the ſame, laying aſide the ſtudy " of the world and the fleſh; — that he will be " diligent to frame and faſhion his own ſelf and " his family according to the doctrine of Chriſt, " and to make both himſelf and them, as much " as in him lieth, wholeſom examples and pat- " terns to the flock of Chriſt; — that he will " maintain and ſet forwards, as much as in him " lieth, quietneſs, peace, and love, among all " Chriſtian people, and eſpecially among thoſe " that are or ſhall be committed to his charge."

I omit the *firſt*, *third*, and *eighth* of theſe queſtions, and the anſwers to them, without any remark, becauſe, whatever I or any other perſon may think of them, theſe declarations, in my opinion, are what no conſcientious miniſter would refuſe to make, and are as good ſecurity as any Proteſtant church can in reaſon demand, for the due diſcharge of the paſtoral office; and, I believe, I ſhould have few opponents, if I ſhould add, that whoever performs *thus much* of what he promiſes at his ordination, will give little occaſion to the church to bind him in any ſtricter obligation. I will go one ſtep farther ſtill. There is nothing in this declaration, but what the *diſſenting clergy* themſelves might declare; and, being laid down as a common meaſure for all *li-*

cenſed or *tolerated* miniſters, one complaint would be effectually removed, namely, that the diſſenting clergy are entitled to their privileges and emoluments upon eaſier terms, than thoſe of the eſtabliſhed church.

But, all this while, you will ſay, we have no evidence of this man's opinions; he may think very differently from the church, when he comes to interpret the ſcriptures. The words of this declaration are *general* and *indeterminate:* and after all, they are but *words*. Here is no *ſubſcription*; and conſequently nothing whereby the *declarer* may be convicted of falſhood or prevarication, in caſe he ſhould break his engagements with the church.

I anſwer to ſome of theſe objections, by aſking ſome queſtions. What evidence have you of the opinions of him who ſubſcribes to the thirty-nine articles? Do not the very champions of the church inſiſt, that the words of theſe articles are *general* and *indeterminate*, and ſuſceptible of different ſenſes? Has not this been lately aſſerted from the pulpit, in the face of the univerſity of *Cambridge*, at the ſolemn time of commencement, in a ſermon afterwards printed, and diſperſed all over the nation [*B*]?

For the reſt, I take it for granted, that whoever has no objection to the making this declaration, *ore tenus*, in public, will have none to the

[*B*] 1757, by Dr. *Powell.*

ſubſcribing

ſubſcribing his name to it. And, if that will ſatisfy, it is a circumſtance which will readily be given up.

There is, indeed, ſomething in this declaration, that amounts to an acknowledgment of the divine authority of the ſcriptures; and Dr. *Hartley*, having firſt reprobated all other ſubſcriptions, hath ſeen fit to add, "That it ſeems needleſs, or in-"ſnaring, to ſubſcribe, even to the ſcriptures "themſelves. If to any particular canon, copy, "&c. inſnaring, becauſe of the many real doubts "in theſe things. If not, it is quite ſuperfluous "from the latitude allowed [*C*]."

I will freely declare, that I think this is ſpinning the thread too fine. But, before I proceed to offer my ſentiments upon the whole of this paſſage, let us conſider, what may be inferred from ſo much of it, as may be ſafely allowed; and that is, that to require ſubſcription to any particular copy or canon of ſcripture, is *inſnaring*.

That no man, or body of men, have authority to authenticate *one* copy of the ſcriptures, rather than another, will, I ſuppoſe, appear ſufficiently to thoſe who have read and conſidered what the writers among the Reformed have written concerning the ſuperior reſpect paid to the *Vulgate* by the council of *Trent*. Even the cooler ſort of the Roman catholic writers themſelves have

[*C*] Obſervations, vol. II. p. 353.

found this ſo reaſonable and evident, that, to ſave the honour of the council, they have been obliged to hunt for a more commodious ſenſe of the canon, than the plain words import; that is to ſay, a ſenſe which does *not* imply that the Fathers of *Trent* intended to authenticate the Latin verſion in preference to any other [*D*].

Hence ariſes an argument *a fortiori*, againſt requiring ſubſcription to creeds, articles, or ſyſtems, either dogmatical or explanatory, compoſed and eſtabliſhed by human authority. If no body of men have authority to authenticate one copy of the ſcriptures above another, no body of men have authority to interpret the ſcriptures, ſo as to authenticate ſuch interpretation, as a ſtandard for all who receive the ſcriptures. The encroachment upon Chriſtian liberty is the ſame in both caſes. The authority of the council of *Trent*, in the former caſe, was diſowned on all hands. And concerning the power of Chriſtian magiſtrates at large, Dr. *Hartley* has truly obſerved, that "the "power which they have from God to inflict "puniſhment upon ſuch as diſobey, and to con"fine the natural liberty of acting within certain "bounds, for the common good of their ſub"jects, is of a nature very foreign to the pre-

[*D*] *Le Clerc*, Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de *Hollande* ſur l'Hiſtoire Critique du Vieux Teſtament, par Mr. *Simon*.' Lettre xiv. p. 311, 312, &c. *and* Defenſe des *Sentimens*, &c. Lettre xiii. p. 327. e. q. ſ.

tences

"tences for confining opinions by diſcourage-
"ments and puniſhments [*E*]."

I cannot, however, come into this worthy perſon's ſentiments, with reſpect to the *inutility* of ſubſcribing to the ſcriptures with more latitude, let the ſubſcriber pitch upon (for his own uſe) what copy or canon you will.

It has been obſerved over and over, that, notwithſtanding the variations of ſo many MSS. of the New Teſtament, "there is not one various "reading, chooſe it as aukwardly as you can, "by which one article of faith or moral precept "is either perverted or loſt,——or in which the "various reading is of any conſequence to the "main of religion, nay, perhaps, is not wholly "ſynonymous in the view of common readers, "and quite inſenſible in any modern verſion" [*F*].

Again, with reſpect to the canon; thoſe books which have been among the ἀντιλεγομενα, are allowed to be perfectly conſiſtent, in point of doctrine and precept, with thoſe whoſe authority is more indiſputable, by reaſon of their univerſal reception; which latter however, of themſelves, contain all things neceſſary to be believed, or known, in the Chriſtian religion. So that whether you admit or reject the doubtful books, it

[*E*] Obſervations, vol. II. p. 351.

[*F*] *Bentley's* Remarks on a diſcourſe of Free-thinking, 6th edit. part i. p. 69—72.

is the ſame rule of faith and manners, by which you are guided.

This being admitted, it is ſurely a ſufficient deſcription of the ſcriptures, to call them *the books of the Old and New Teſtament, generally received among Chriſtians*; and for a public paſtor to declare, that he believes the ſcriptures, and will make the contents of them the rule of his teaching, is a very moderate ſecurity, and no more than the ſociety with which he is connected may with reaſon expect.

I have, indeed, met with ſome gentlemen, ſufficiently diſguſted with the preſent forms and objects of our ſubſcriptions, who would propoſe, that the candidate ſhould deliver in an account of his belief of the ſcriptures, and of the principal articles of faith he draws from thence, in ſome form of *his own*. "The man himſelf," ſay theſe worthy perſons, "beſt knows his own conceptions "concerning the authority, as well as the con-"tents, of the ſcriptures; and, by expreſſing "thoſe conceptions in his own language, he will "convey to whom it may concern, a much clearer "idea of his reverence for thoſe ſacred oracles, "and of the weight and authority he aſcribes to "them, than can poſſibly be gathered from his "aſſent to any other form compoſed by others. "Not to mention the abſurdity of obliging men "to confeſs *their own* faith in the words of others, "who have no more authority or any better pre-

"tence

"tence to interpret the ſcriptures than them-
"ſelves.

"They," continue theſe gentlemen, "who
"are fond of deriving our rituals, and other ec-
"cleſiaſtical *apparatus*, from primitive antiquity,
"will find, that this was the ancient method ta-
"ken to prove the orthodoxy of Chriſtian bi-
"ſhops; and indeed ſeems to be much better
"calculated for the purpoſe of a teſt, than either
"the preſent articles, or any others for which
"they ſhould be exchanged."

With theſe gentlemen I ſo far agree, as to de-
ſire that ſuch an experiment might be made *for a limited time*, and in the caſe only of our *elder* divines, who may be ſuppoſed to have formed ſuch judgment on theſe matters, as they are not likely to retract. Many of theſe take inſtitution to new preferments, in an advanced age, and may be ſuppoſed to have cloſed their ſtudies, or, as a certain author has it, *made up their minds*, with reſpect to all theological opinions, when they offer themſelves to the trial.

But, I believe, the certain conſequence would be, that they who ſhould be appointed to receive theſe formularies, perceiving a wide difference in the ſentiments of theſe veterans, many of whom would be found to be men of the ſoundeſt learning and brighteſt capacities, would think it much better, theſe candidates ſhould be left to the enjoyment of their own opinions in ſecret, than that they,

they, or the church they belong to, ſhould, by ſuch reſcripts under their hands, be expoſed to the perverſe reflections that might be made upon their reſpective variations from each other.

Nothing, indeed, could be more inſnaring to the younger ſort of candidates for the miniſtry, than this method propoſed by theſe worthy perſons above-mentioned. Theſe formularies might be produced againſt them at ſome future period, when, in the courſe of their ſtudies, they had found reaſon to change their minds. An inconvenience, to which the declaration I have propoſed, and which is drawn as above from the ordination-office, is not liable. There the candidate is ſuppoſed to be ſtill carrying on the ſtudy of the ſcriptures, "along with ſuch [other] ſtu-"dies, as help to the [farther] knowledge of the "ſame;" a ſuppoſition, which ſeems to me to be abſolutely inconſiſtent with *any peremptory* aſſent to the articles, *as agreeable to the word of God*, at his firſt entrance upon his miniſtry.

There is another circumſtance which recommends theſe forms of declaration extremely, and that is the *modeſty* with which the anſwers to the ſeveral queſtions are expreſſed, agreeable to that ſtate of *probation*, in which the compilers of the office knew young candidates muſt remain, at leaſt for ſome conſiderable time.

"Are you *perſuaded*," ſays the ſecond queſtion, "that the holy ſcriptures contain ſufficiently all "doctrine

"doctrine required of neceſſity for eternal ſalva-
"tion, through faith in Jeſus Chriſt?" — The candidate anſwers, "I am ſo *perſuaded*." And ſo he very well may be, without having examined the ſcriptures with that application and accuracy, which are neceſſary to form a judgment upon their *whole* contents. The object of *this* perſuaſion lies within a ſmall compaſs; and the knowledge neceſſary to produce it, may be obtained with a thouſandth part of the pains neceſſary to perſuade an ingenuous mind, that our xxxix Articles of religion are in perfect agreement with the word of God.

When we conſider the caſe of candidates for orders in general, it may well be queſtioned, whether the *perſuaſion* above-mentioned is not as far as the majority of them can ſafely go.

Many of them, in the northern dioceſes eſpecially, come immediately from a grammar-ſchool, where they have thought of nothing but learning Latin and Greek. At the univerſities, the point for the firſt four years, is to qualify themſelves for their firſt degree, which they may take with the utmoſt honour and credit, without ever having ſeen the inſide of a Bible [*G*]. And it ſhould

[*G*] "Young men," ſaid Dr. *Prideaux*, "frequently come to "the univerſity, without any knowledge or tincture of religion "at all; and have little opportunity of improving themſelves "therein, whilſt under-graduates, becauſe the courſe of their "ſtudies inclines them to philoſophy, and other kinds of learn-"ing; and they are uſually admitted to their firſt degree of

ſeem,

ſeem, by an anecdote in the Life of Dr. *Humphrey Prideaux*, as if it were determined, that, during that interval, it is better they ſhould not.

That anecdote is as follows. "Dr. *Buſby* offered to found two catechiſtical lectures, with "an endowment of 100 *l.* *per annum* each, "for inſtructing the under-graduates in the rudiments of the Chriſtian religion, provided all "the ſaid under-graduates ſhould be obliged to "attend the ſaid lectures, and none of them be "admitted to the degree of Bachelors of Arts, "till after having been examined by the catechiſt, "as to their knowledge in the doctrines and precepts of the Chriſtian religion, and by him approved of. — But this condition being rejected "by *both* univerſities, the benefaction was rejected "therewith, and the church hath ever ſince ſuffered for the want of it [*H*]."

Our univerſities are generally eſteemed to be ſo far out of the reach of all reprehenſion, that I ſhould not have ventured to have retailed this little piece of hiſtory upon the credit of a leſs reſponſible voucher than Dr. *Prideaux*. But as

"Bachelors of Arts, with the ſame ignorance, as to all ſacred "learning, as when firſt admitted into the univerſity; and "many of them, as ſoon as they have taken that degree, offering "themſelves for orders, are *too often admitted to be teachers* in "the church, when they are only fit to be catechumens therein." *Life* of Dr. *H. Prideaux*, printed for *Knapton*, 1748, p. 91.

[*H*] Ibid. p. 92. Dr. *Busby* was not ignorant, with what tincture of religion theſe youngſters either came to him or went from him.

the

the fact ſtands upon ſo good authority, I hope I may be indulged in a few reflexions upon it, without being accuſed of *outraging* theſe reſpectable bodies, for which I have the utmoſt veneration [*I*].

[*I*] They who will be at the pains to look into the end of the *Preface* to the ſecond edition of the *Divine Legation*, publiſhed in the year 1742, will find enough to frighten any man from ever hinting at any blemiſhes in our univerſities. By the ſacred fence with which they are there incloſed, one would think every gremial as ſafe from *impugners*, as an article of faith is, when it hath once got into an *eſtabliſhed confeſſion*. The *Prefacer*, perhaps, did not then know that they had been attacked by any more conſiderable perſon, than the addle-headed Dr. *Webſter*; much leſs that the eminent Dr. *Prideaux* had propoſed, among other neceſſary regulations in theſe ſeats of learning, to have a new college erected in each by the name of DRONE-HALL, for reaſons there ſpecified, by no means honourable to the academical bodies. If I miſtake not, *two* editions of the *Divine Legation* have ſince appeared without *that* Preface, which indeed would with a very ill grace have introduced to our notice a book, wherein ſuch freedoms are taken with THE KING'S PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY in one of the univerſities, and matter of ridicule and contempt raiſed from circumſtances of the office, common to *all profeſſors* in the ſame chair. I have ſeen a liſt of the *compliments* paid to the learned and worthy Profeſſor in the performance above-mentioned, drawn out into one view, for which, according to the opinion of very competent judges, the Profeſſor might have made his *concurrent* a *legal* return, in a way, however, which would have ſhewn the little propriety of dedicating a *thing*, with the title the lawyers gave it, to the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND. I have ſince learned, from one of our *monthly* productions, that the ſame hand hath been more lately full as liberal to another *Profeſſor* of the other univerſity, leſt *both* ſhould not equally partake of its favours. In this laſt inſtance (ſuch is his diſtreſs) he finds himſelf obliged to pull off his own

In

In my humble opinion, the moſt reaſonable account that could be given of the motives of theſe learned bodies for rejecting a benefaction of this ſort, would be, that ſufficient care is already taken for the Chriſtian inſtruction of theſe younger ſtudents, without the aid of a *ſupernumerary* catechiſt. If ſo, both theſe doctors muſt have been miſtaken, the one in deſcribing the diſtemper, the other in indicating the method of cure.

The *rejection*, indeed, is in the narrative put to the account of the *condition*, perhaps becauſe the catechiſt, after the candidate had ſatisfied his examiners in philoſophy, might have it in his power to put a negative upon him, for deficiency in Chriſtian knowledge, which would look like an hardſhip; and the rather, as there ſeems to be an expedient already in the hands of both univerſities, calculated to anſwer all the ends of appointing a particular caſuiſt.

For, if I am not miſinformed, in both univerſities, every maſter of arts hath a right to examine every candidate for a batchelor's degree, and a power of putting a negative upon him, and as much for a deficiency in Chriſtian knowledge,

ſolemn *inquiſitorial* robe, and force it on to the ſhoulders of the worthy Profeſſor. After which, he himſelf drolls away in the *Querpo* of a *pickle herring*, firſt to divert, and then to eſcape from, the juſt indignation of his affronted audience. See a late *Letter to the R. R. Author of the Div. Leg. of Moſes Demonſtrated, in Anſwer to the Appendix to the fifth Volume of that work.*

as

as for any other default. Upon inquiry however, I am told, that few if any candidates have their degree poſtponed on that account. Perhaps ſome may think it is, becauſe they are ſeldom or never examined in that branch, for a reaſon which the univerſities think very ſufficient, and which operates equally to the excluſion of an appointed catechiſt.

Let us ſuppoſe this reaſon to be the impropriety of intermixing catechiſtical examinations with thoſe which aſcertain the candidate's qualifications for a degree in arts, and of a catechiſt's interfering in the conferring ſuch degree; yet might not the *condition* be model'd by a ſmall alteration, ſo as to render ſuch a benefaction eligible both to the univerſities and the public?

Suppoſe, for example, no academical candidate ſhould be promoted to the office of *deacon*, without exhibiting to the biſhop, among the reſt of his papers, a teſtimonial from the academical catechiſt of his proficiency in Chriſtian knowledge? It does not ſeem at firſt ſight at all more proper, that the *arts* which qualify a man for a batchelor's degree ſhould of themſelves qualify him for the Chriſtian miniſtry, than that Chriſtian knowledge alone ſhould qualify a man for a degree in arts.

But here I ſhall certainly be told, that this is the affair of the Biſhops, and not of the Univerſi-

ties;

ties; and that it is an unwarrantable reflexion upon their Lordſhips to ſuppoſe, they ſhould want to be informed by a catechiſt, of the abilities of a candidate in that branch of knowledge, which is the particular object of their own examinations.

To this I can only anſwer in the words of Dr. *Prideaux* above-cited, "many who have taken "their firſt degree, ARE TOO OFTEN ADMITTED "to be *teachers in the* church, when they are on-"ly fit to be *catechumens.*" Perhaps, matters may have mended ſince the days of Dr. *Prideaux*; or if not, the *whole* fault may not belong to the Biſhops and their examiners. For if, as the worthy Dean of *Norwich* hath obſerved, "biſhops "are often deceived by *falſe teſtimonials*," the univerſities may come in for a ſhare of the blame, ſince they give as ample teſtimonials, and often upon as ſlender grounds (particularly with reſpect to *Chriſtian knowledge*), as country miniſters.

In the mean time, theſe conſiderations, as matters now ſtand, make it ſtill more neceſſary, that the church (to ſave the credit of all parties) ſhould content herſelf with the declaration, framed from the ordination-office, ſet forth above. This declaration, not only admits of *improvements* in theological learning, but exhibits the candidate as *determined* to make them; and ſurely the profeſſing ſuch determination, ſhould be no trifling

ling part of the ſecurity he gives to the church. And after that, to require the ſame candidate to ſubſcribe to a ſyſtem of opinions, or *interpretations of ſcripture*, eſtabliſhed in perpetuity, and which he may not *gainſay* at any future period (notwiſtanding what he may find in the ſcripture to the contrary) on the peril of being excommunicated *ipſo facto*, is not only abſolutely to preclude him from all future improvements, but likewiſe diſabling him from performing his promiſe to any good purpoſe, *viz.* "to be diligent "in reading the holy ſcriptures, and in ſuch "ſtudies as help to the knowledge of the ſame."

"No, ſays a late notable Caſuiſt, young people "may give a general aſſent to the articles, *on the* "*authority of others*; more cannot be expected or "underſtood to be done by thoſe who are juſt "beginning to exerciſe their reaſon — by which "means room is left for *improvements* in theo-"logy [*K*]."

Which, as I take it, implies a ſuppoſition that theſe *young* ſubſcribers are left at liberty to *retract* their aſſent to the articles, if, in the progreſs of their ſtudies, they find what they aſſented to inconſiſtent with their farther diſcoveries and improvements in theology. And, if this is *really* the caſe, why would not the preacher ſpeak out?

[*K*] See Dr. *Powell's* Sermon, on Commencement-Sunday, 1757.

This ſermon, ſo far as I know, is the laſt formal *Defence* of the ſubſcriptions required in the church of *England*, that hath yet appeared; and is ſo well calculated to *make all ends meet*, that it is a thouſand pities it ſhould ever be ſuperſeded by any new production upon the ſubject, which may *change the poſture of Defence*; particularly, as (in conjunction with two or three other tracts, lately publiſhed) it will greatly aſſiſt our poſterity in forming a true judgment of the *liberal ſentiments* of the preſent age on the article of *moral honeſty*, as well as give them a juſt idea of our *improvements in theology*, and how far we go beyond the *zeal* and *dexterity* of our forefathers, in accommodating *plain*, *ſimple*, *naked* Chriſtianity, with the arts, ornaments, opulence, power, and policy of the kingdoms of this world.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM

